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NOVEMBER 2002
NUMBER 127

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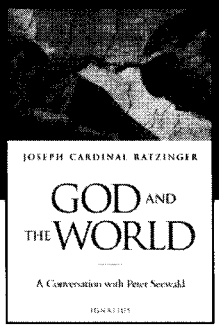

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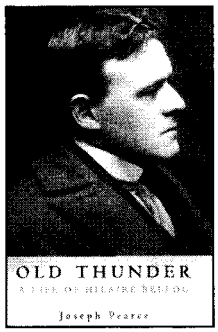

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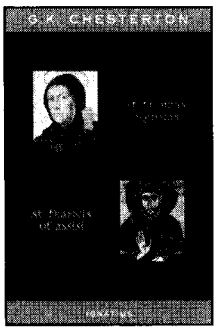

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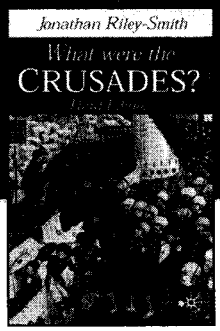

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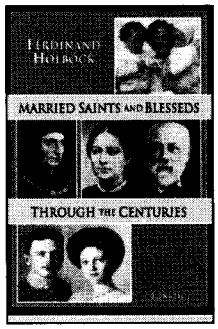

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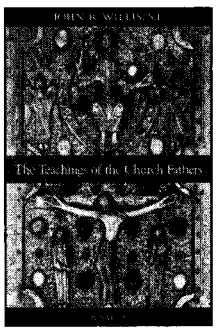

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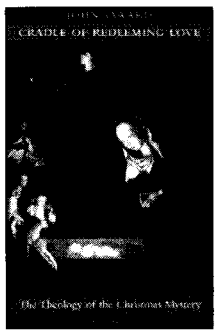

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Ethics Without God

J. Budziszewski's article "The Second Tablet Project" (June/July) is the clearest, most cogent brief examination I have seen of the problem of doing ethics without God. I agree with him that any attempt to justify a system of ethics while denying its metaphysical basis is doomed to ultimate failure. And I agree that the best thing that the people who try to come up with ethics without God can do is to start believing in God. But as I read Professor Budziszewski's conclusion, I was disappointed to find that he stopped short of making any truly practical recommendations for Christians, Jews, and other religious believers who want to do something about the state of professional ethics in the modern world.

Perhaps it was not Prof. Budziszewski's intention to provide guidelines for what believers should do, but to advise us what not to do: namely, to leave out the First Tablet (or more broadly, metaphysics in general) while trying to hang on to the Second. This may be possible in academic departments of government, political science, and philosophy, where a certain amount of discussion of religion is tolerated. But in the hard sciences and my own profession of engineering, the metaphysical naturalism that forms the basis of much scientific and technical education presents a tremendous barrier to the discussion of a metaphysical basis for science or engineering ethics.

An example will help to show the depth and scope of the problem. The book review editor of a publication connected with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) recently asked me to review a new textbook on science and engineering ethics. (The IEEE is the largest professional organization of engineers in the world, with some 300,000 members worldwide.) The book was a surprisingly ill-considered brief for an old-style H. G. Wells-type of materialism in which, among other things, the author cursorily dismissed all metaphysics and argued forcefully for widespread human cloning as the next logical step in mankind's (now self-driven) evolutionary progress.

If I had been reviewing the book for FIRST THINGS or a similar publication in which discussion of religion is not out of bounds, I would have taken its author to task for his philosophically shoddy and narrow-minded approach to issues that vibrate with metaphysical resonances. But knowing about the readership of IEEE publications, I did not feel free to do much more than point out that large numbers of engineering students profess some sort of belief in God, and to attempt to turn them all into materialists before proceeding with ethics might be a tactical error.

According to Prof. Budziszewski's criteria, was this an act of intellectual cowardice? Or was it a practical accommodation to circumstances in which I tried to do as much good as possible without violating the ground rules that govern discourse in my profession? The penalty for such violation is generally rejection of one's review or manuscript. The dilemma is either to base one's argument on clearly religious principles and face outright rejection and silencing, or to use such principles selectively, perhaps leaving them in the background while nevertheless making arguments that are consistent with them. And this dilemma is one that thousands of believers must deal with in a wide variety of professions, from engineering and the sciences to politics, medicine, and the law.

The issue is especially critical for believers who educate technical pro-

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fessionals, who in turn go on to develop such programs as the abominable human-pig crossing experiment that Prof. Budziszewski cites. I seriously doubt whether many of the individuals who work on those projects read FIRST THINGS, but I can guarantee you that they hold advanced professional degrees from schools where the ethical dimensions of their profession should have been addressed in more than a cursory way. But the more I learn about the way ethics is typically taught in the various technical professions (if it is taught at all), the less surprised I am at the contributions to our modem chamber of horrors that the biomedical industry comes up with. There are a few signs here and there that some professionals are slowly realizing that things have gone too far, and are beginning to look around for better ways to teach ethics. Educators who are also believers should be prepared to fill that gap.

I once heard the philosopher J. P. Moreland address the question of how Christian academics can integrate their faith into their professional activities. One way, he said, was to focus one's academic work on a field's ethical or humanistic aspects. This is easier in some fields than in others. Engineers, in particular, tend to look for fail-safe, air-tight "solutions" to problems, whereas many situations in life simply do not admit of such solutions. Instead, one simply does as much as one can, when and where one can, and continually looks for opportunities (such as my book review) to present a point of view that is explicitly Christian (or religious) when possible, but at least implicitly so if the context of discourse does not permit a forthright appeal to religion. If Prof. Budziszewski believes my approach is just the Second Tablet Project in disguise, I am sorry. But perhaps it will provoke him to write another article in which he will advise believers what to do, as well as what not to do.

Karl D. Stephan
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

J. Budziszewski replies:

I thank Professor Stephan for his thoughtful letter. He considers antitheism a straitjacket, and I agree. He thinks that it ought to be challenged, and so do I. He supposes it more entrenched in fields like his than in fields like mine. I wouldn't say that. Not as many of the people on my side of the tracks think that only the physical is real; then again, not as many of the people on his side think that reality isn't real in the first place. Still, his question is right on the mark: How can believing scholars challenge the antitheism of the disciplines? Although this question is too big to answer in less than another article, perhaps I can tackle his hypothetical case.

A professional journal asks a man of faith to review an H. G. Wells-style textbook of engineering ethics. The book is a materialist hatchet job that disses God, pushes materialism, and plumps for the abolition of man. The reviewer would like to take the author to task for his shoddy arguments, but the journal discourages discussion of religion. He is in a tight spot. What can he say?

Quite a bit, I think. The journal may discourage discussion of religion, but the textbook itself discusses religion. To diss is to discuss. The journal's readers may not be interested in metaphysics, but the textbook itself discusses metaphysics. "Matter is all there is" is a metaphysical commitment. A good opening wedge is to point these things out. Besides, we never know what people will find interesting until we try them.

Tautologies say nothing new, but they remind us of things we know already. In that spirit I suggest a starting point. The only way to challenge the antitheism of the disciplines is to challenge it.

Catholic Scandals (Cont.)

I object to Richard John Neuhaus' characterization of Bernard Cardinal Law in "Scandal Time Continued" (Public Square, June/July) as "more part of the problem than of the solution." This is a very inaccurate statement that reflects the secular media's position rather than objective reality.

The main question concerning both critics and supporters of Cardinal Law is whether he is capable of leading the Archdiocese of Boston through this current crisis. The Cardinal was open to submitting his resignation in mid-April, but Pope John Paul II refused it and urged the Cardinal to clean up the mess. I suspect that the Pope's judgment is far more trustworthy than that of the press.

One case in particular that has not been reported is the 1993 case in Woburn, Massachusetts, in which the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church caught the parochial vicar in the act of raping a twelve-year-old boy. The pastor immediately reported the incident to Cardinal Law, who advised the pastor to report it immediately to the police. The pastor did so and of course it was covered by the press. Everything was done in exactly the manner in which the press is now calling on the Church to handle these cases. Unfortunately, the end result wasn't as neat as many would like. The parochial vicar was very popular in the parish, and the parents of the twelve-year-old refused to let the boy testify. The parochial vicar was acquitted in the criminal case, and the pastor became so unpopular in the parish that it was necessary to transfer him. The Cardinal, however, eventually laicized the parochial vicar, despite the acquittal in court. That doesn't sound like the action of a man who is callously indifferent to the suffering of his flock.

I truly believe that Cardinal Law is very serious about addressing this issue as a real problem and not just as a public relations fiasco. I believe that the Cardinal will be successful in leading us out of this mess, and that when it is all over the Church will be much stronger for it.

Daniel R. Guilderson
Winchester, Massachusetts

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Editor-in-Chief

Richard John Neuhaus says that Protestants have just as many clergy sexual scandals as do Catholics. I haven't been able to find any reliable figures on the matter myself, but I have no doubt that his claim is accurate. Father Neuhaus suggests that the Catholic scandals get so much more media attention because of anti-Catholic prejudice and because the Catholic Church is much bigger and more visible than any Protestant group.

But the biggest reason for the discrepancy is that the Protestant scandals lack the element of a closely knit hierarchy committed to covering up the scandals and protecting the perpetrators at all costs. Cardinal Law is at the epicenter of the situation not because anyone has accused him of inappropriate acts with children, but because of his attempts to provide cover (and more opportunity) to those who he knew were committing such acts. It appears to this outsider (and to many Catholics) that Cardinal Law's behavior has been the rule among bishops, and not the exception. Hence the attention.

Joel Bruhn
Lafayette, Indiana

I am happy to commend Richard John Neuhaus for recognizing that the sexual scandal in the Church is about homosexuality and not pedophilia.

However, I cannot commend his claim that the problem is not mandatory celibacy. Celibacy, as everyone knows but not everyone will admit, encourages many of the wrong people to enter the priesthood. Catholics have always been suspicious of celibate men, believing them either secretly lustful heterosexuals or secret homosexuals. A married priesthood would not guarantee virtue, but it would greatly lessen the likelihood of gay rape and molestation of teenage boys. I wish that Catholic priests would finally tell it like it is. The laity has long since given up its ghetto mentality where everything traditionally Catholic had to be defended against the enemies of the faith.

Norman Ravitch
Professor Emeritus of History
University of California at Riverside

Thank you for Richard John Neuhaus' essay on the Catholic Church scandals. It is rare to find conservative-leaning commentary on matters of sexuality, especially homosexuality, that is not a grotesque caricature of moral reasoning. While I disagree with many of Father Neuhaus' views, I'm grateful that his position is (mostly) carefully reasoned and comes from deep spiritual conviction.

I agree with Fr. Neuhaus about the bishops' dereliction of duty, and I mostly agree with him about fidelity being at the root of the scandal. But we disagree on the nature of fidelity. I would maintain that a body of the faithful without the freedom to dissent against, and to disobey, flawed moral teaching is a body without the freedom to be faithful. I consider the traditional church teaching on homosexuality to be flawed in a way that demands a response.

One flaw among many is that this teaching breeds among heterosexuals misunderstanding and false compassion toward homosexuals. This is bad enough in personal relationships, but it has also led to a whole host of theories about the current crisis that don't take into account crucial realities about the gay community.

The "lavender mafia," for instance: anyone who has spent much time in the gay community is familiar with the mix of irreverence and rebelliousness that seems to characterize this clerical cadre. It's a constant in gay culture, going back at least a century.

These qualities come in part from anger about the negative messages about gays we hear all around us. We survive by mocking the conventional wisdom that would enslave us and by seeing how much we can get away

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with. The image of priests openly dishing with each other about who's the cutest novice, while a serious breach of faith and trust, is a reflection of this element of gay culture.

We gay people understand that we have our enemies, who do not disguise their hatred; our friends, who understand and love us as we are and are concerned for our well-being; and false friends, whose superficial "respect" and "love" masks a deeper contempt. These false friends don't understand our history. They don't understand the wounds we have suffered over the millennia, and how those wounds have shaped the beautiful—flawed, but beautiful—community that we are today. They are so busy looking for evidence of our sinfulness that they don't see the extraordinary creativity, compassion, and joy in life of which we are capable. At best, they see these, our charismata, as being irredeemably tainted by our sexuality.

If Fr. Neuhaus' article accurately reflects his views on homosexuality, then he is one of these false friends. He repeatedly invokes "virility" as a characteristic of an ideal candidate for the priesthood, which in context is a none-too-veiled rehearsal of the cliché that gay men lack masculine power. (Further, the fact that the word connotes the ability to procreate makes it a strange choice of terms for a celibate caste.) Fr. Neuhaus also comments with disgust on the "pornograph[ic]" nature of the gay press, without noting that heterosexual advertising is often no better. Throughout, his view of gay people lacks charity. He finds and emphasizes our worst while overlooking our best, and by example encourages others to do the same.

Is this what Fr. Neuhaus means by "loving the sinner"? Most of the time, when Christians say they hate the "sin of homosexuality" but love the sinners, their actions show that they hate the sin and condescend to the sinners. That is not the love that Christ taught.

It is true that much is not right in the gay community. We have a lot of growing up to do. We need criticism whose intent is to help us grow. We do not need simply to be told how much worse gay people are than straight. Such criticism reinforces the critic's sense of moral superiority without embodying the grace of Christ. We know when someone's criticism of us is self-serving. We are not fooled.

Gay priests, bishops, and abbots are not fooled by Rome's failure to trust the depth of their spirituality as gay men. They are right to be disappointed, even angry, about it. If the Church is the Holy Mother, then I must ask what kind of mother tells some of her children that their very presence is suspect?

Where gay clergy are not right is to act out their frustration by sabotaging the system. Acting out, while understandable, is the antithesis of deep spiritual practice and compromises their ability to be spiritual leaders. If clergy are not being taught to approach their feelings in a way that moves beyond the desire to act out, then this is part of the problem.

The "lavender mafia" represents, in part, a backlash against the idea that sexuality is an enemy to be conquered. As with many backlashes, it swings too far in the other direction. Rome can help to restore the balance by understanding sexuality not merely as a procreative force, but as a wellspring of creative energy that can be channeled through contemplation. This will create ministers who are celibate and whole, and help put to rest the idea that celibacy is an unnatural, dangerous state.

Rome does not need to change its stance on homosexuality to do this (although I still think it should). A broadening of perspective will suffice. I wish I could hope to see it in my lifetime. In the meantime, gay and straight people whose lives don't fit Rome's acceptable model will continue to have beautiful, nourishing contact with the Divine, with or without the Vatican's acknowledgment. This is what gives me hope.

H. James Harkins
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

RJN replies:
I welcome what I take to be Dr. Harkins' agreement with the Church's rule of "perfect and perpetual continence," also for priests who experience same-sex desires. His use of "gay people" and "gay community" is, in my judgment, highly problematic. My own view on these questions, which I am persuaded is neither condescending nor uncharitable, is that of the Ramsey Colloquium—composed of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish theologians and ethicists—set forth in the statement, "The Homosexual Movement" (FT, March 1994).

Vestigial Symbols?

Richard John Neuhaus' observations in While We're At It (June/July) that the real battle over "the naked public square" is not the display there of "various public symbols, often of a vestigial nature," but "the exclusion of religion and religiously grounded arguments" could not be more pertinent. This is precisely the point brought home to us by the latest Ninth Circuit Court holding striking down as unconstitutional the "under God" section of the Pledge of Allegiance.

While kooky, the decision of the Ninth Circuit panel actually is totally in line with some of the main strands of our Supreme Court's Establishment Clause jurisprudence. The Ninth Circuit judges bottomed their reasoning squarely on the Supreme Court's "no endorsement of religion test" (as well as the "no coercion" and "no religious purpose and effect" test) which, in the words of its creator Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, reasons thus: "What is crucial is that a government practice not have the effect of communicating a message of government endorsement or disapproval of religion."

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But this test, when rigorously and consistently applied, eradicates religion from the public square. What, for instance, happens to Christmas crèches and legislative prayers? Justice O'Connor thought these were fine as long as they were sufficiently sanitized of any serious religion, writing: "Practices such as legislative prayers or opening Court sessions with 'God save the United States and this honorable Court' serve the secular purpose of 'solemnizing public occasions' and expressing confidence in the future—'examples of ceremonial deism.'" To make perfectly clear what he meant by "ceremonial deism," Justice William Brennan, the first one to use this awful phrase, explained back in 1984: "I would suggest that such practices as the designation of 'In God We Trust' as our national motto, or the references to God contained in the Pledge of Allegiance . . . can best be understood, in [Eugene] Rostow's apt phrase, as a form of 'ceremonial deism,' protected from Establishment Clause scrutiny chiefly because they have lost through rote repetition any significant religious content."

In other words, to the degree that prayer is not really prayer, and that these religious utterances are empty of vital religious significance (serving, in Father Neuhaus' words, merely as "public symbols . . . of a vestigial nature"), they are constitutional. That is the position of the United States Supreme Court, and that is why the Ninth Circuit panel ruled as it did.

If this non-endorsement test continues in its development, it cannot be too long before presidential proclamations of days of prayer are struck down, especially if the President, in proclaiming them, indicates that prayer serves a purpose beyond sanctimonious solemnizing.

Of course, the non-endorsement rationale and test fits only awkwardly, if at all, with other tests the Court occasionally uses, tests such as the "historical precedent" test or the "accommodation test." This is precisely why our Establishment Clause jurisprudence is in such confusion, and it is precisely why one is not surprised to see kooky decisions made by such extremely bright people as those who sit on the Ninth Circuit.

Paul M. Miller
Bellevue, Washington

Defending the Drinking Age

I agree with approximately 96 percent of what I read in FIRST THINGS. However, I must take issue with Richard John Neuhaus' item (While We're At It, May) regarding the twenty-one-year-old drinking age. I do so based on personal experience. I graduated from high school in 1975, when in Massachusetts the drinking age was eighteen, based partly on the argument advanced by Father Neuhaus that "if they're old enough to defend our country . . . they're old enough to drink responsibly." Those words resound in AA meeting halls around the country. I'm not a prohibitionist, and I like to take a drink once in a while. But from my current pastoral observation, our high-school-aged youths drink a lot less than my generation. Yes, many flout the law, but many don't, and the country is better off for it, just as we would be better off if abortion were illegal, even while knowing in advance that some would violate such a statute.

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THIS TIME

Fatherhood, 2002

Damon Linker

I'm a new man. I've just slept through the night for the first time in weeks because my newborn son has just slept through the night for the first time in his young life. Don't get me wrong: most nights, he still cries for a feeding at 1:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. But last Monday he terrified his parents by sleeping straight through until 4:00. After bolting out of bed at 2:30 in a Sudden-Infant-Death-Syndrome-inspired panic to discover him sleeping (and breathing) soundly in his crib, my wife and I shuffled back to bed, dimly aware that the first, most physically and emotionally taxing era of parenting would soon be over. Sure enough, it happened again a few nights later—and this time, we allowed ourselves to luxuriate in the glorious expanse of six uninterrupted hours of rest.

Ever since my son's birth in late July, as I've stumbled through life bleary-eyed and irritable, male friends from an older generation have asked me why I get up with my wife to feed the baby. The implication being, of course, that this should be entirely my wife's responsibility, especially since, unlike me, she doesn't have to go to work in the morning. (She's on leave from graduate school at the moment.)

It's always hard to respond to such insinuations. My wife and I have a thoroughly modern, egalitarian marriage in which equality of obligations is the default position; the marriages of my older friends, on the other hand, are based on a more traditional division of labor. The result is two very different experiences of married life.

When I was born in 1969, my mother was anaesthetized, and an obstetrician delivered me with forceps while my father waited for word down the hall in what was called the "Stork Room." Dad wasn't brought in to see mom and baby until both had begun to recover from the trauma of delivery. It was a typical procedure for the time. (Somewhat less typical, though by no means unheard of, is the story of my next-door neighbor, a warm and friendly man in his sixties, who dropped off his wife at the hospital to deliver their son—and then drove back home to await the news.)

Thirty years ago, mothers stayed in the hospital for five to seven days after giving birth, which gave them plenty of time to regain their strength and fathers plenty of time to get back to work. My father took some vacation time for the first few days after I arrived home, but his role in the family was clear: he provided for our financial well-being; my mother handled the feedings and the diapers and the crying at all hours of the day and night.

My experience has been quite different. I was my wife's constant companion during childbirth and the weeks leading up to it. We attended birthing and breast-feeding classes together. I stayed up with her when, late in her pregnancy, discomfort kept her awake for hours every night. I sat beside her and allowed her to grip, twist, and, at one memorable point, claw my neck, arms, and legs during the agonies of labor. I acted as her coach and source of comfort during four hours of excruciating contractions and three hours of pushing, while a nurse-midwife remained discreetly in the background until the final moments before delivery. My son entered the world just inches from my face.

They move women out of the hospital much faster now than when I was born—usually within forty-eight hours. The result is total exhaustion, especially for those, like my wife, who avoid anesthesia during birth and then attempt to breast-feed. Imagine running a marathon without training—and then trying to recover while never allowing yourself to sleep longer than two hours at a time. At least that's how my wife described it. Although at first I couldn't contribute to feeding the baby (we've since begun to supplement breast milk with formula), I wanted to be there by my wife's side in the middle of the night for support, for company, for reassurance when ignorance inevitably led to worrying. Is he really still hungry? Is he peeing enough? Are his stools the right color? Why won't he stop crying? Like all new parents, neither of us were capable of answering these questions with authority, but going through the uncertainty together brought us closer than we've ever been.

Conservatives often point out that modern, liberated women have to endure a profound tension at the core of their lives. Most of them want both the public recognition of the workplace as well as the private fulfillment that comes from motherhood—but the two can rarely be blended as easily and painlessly as feminist activists like to claim. Starting a career means putting off starting a family. Continuing a career after a child is born means returning to work quickly. Returning to work quickly means leaving the baby with strangers, whether it's day care or baby-sitters. Such are the trade-offs that women confront from the moment they decide to pursue a career.

One way to resolve the tension would be to return to the parental division of labor that existed in the

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"traditional" family, where the mother remained at home, forsaking a career and taking full-time responsibility for raising the children. This is the option often proposed (or silently pined for) by conservatives, who believe that such a return would not only ameliorate the tragic choices faced by so many modern women, but would also ensure the long-term health and vitality of the family, which today often seems to be in the process of slow-motion collapse.

However much I sympathize with the motivations behind such suggestions, I can't help but think that, for most people, returning to the premodern family is both impossible and undesirable. Not only does it face powerful opposition from feminist ideology, which isn't likely to disappear anytime soon, but more fundamentally, it ignores the fact that the structure of the family has changed over the last two centuries in ways that make women's longing to work outside the home quite reasonable.

In the premodern world of the traditional family, life was predominantly agricultural. While the mother cared for the young children and supervised the chores of her older daughters in the home, the father worked in the fields along with his older sons, usually within walking distance of the front door. The nuclear family would come together for meals and social gatherings, frequently joined by members of the extended family who, when they did not reside under the same roof, usually lived nearby.

For most of us, things are very different today. For all the hype about "telecommuting" in the 1990s, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of people travel outside the home to work—a journey often involving a substantial real-world commute. Moreover, most Americans now live in suburbs, far away from extended family members. Ever since the 1950s, a woman choosing the life of the stay-at-home mom has faced the prospect of isolation far more profound than would have been typical in earlier times. After her husband walks out the door in the morning, she is usually left alone with only her child for company. Such a life is hardly traditional; nor is it, for many women, appealing. And understandably so.

An alternative—one that works with rather than against the egalitarian tendencies of modernity—is to embrace the kind of order that prevails within families like mine. Instead of asking women to suppress their desire for the goods that come from pursuing an occupation outside the home, men could begin to put somewhat less emphasis on their own careers and recognize the very real goods that flow from sharing more of the joys and the burdens of parenting—even if it means that they must live with the same tensions faced by modern women. (Of course such tensions could be somewhat diminished for both parents if the government would expand the provisions for maternity leave that are part of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. We could also follow the lead of many European countries in providing for paternity leave. Surely a nation as wealthy as ours could afford the costs of policies that would so clearly benefit the modern family.)

Would my life be easier if, in premodern fashion, my wife took on almost all the responsibility of caring for our son? Perhaps. I'd certainly have gotten more rest during the first few months of his life. But then I'd have spent so much less time feeding him, changing his diapers, holding him in my arms, rocking him to sleep, and comforting him during hour-long crying binges. For all the stresses and strains of life as a new man, there's no substitute for the act of devoting oneself to another person, especially one so helpless and needy. It—and arguably it alone—grants a gift of spontaneous, unconditional love that every human being, and not just women, should experience. I, for one, wouldn't have it any other way. FT

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Opinion

Feeling Moral

J. Budziszewski

"Luke! Trust your feelings!" As we know, Luke does what he is told, and the galaxy is saved. How fortunate that he did not trust his mind and skill, as he was tempted to, because then the evil empire would have won. The *Star Wars* movies express a view of how to live, a *morality of feeling*, found far beyond the perimeter of the Dreamworks studio. As Keats wrote to a friend, "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!"

The morality of feelings turns out to be quite ecumenical. From a Roman Catholic website advising young people how to recognize the call of God: "Listen to your feelings." From a young evangelical's letter to a college magazine: "I became convinced that *this* is the guy God want[s] me to marry. . . . [But] *he's* prayed about it and feels that *she's* the one God wants him to marry. . . . There are times that I *feel* that maybe he's wrong about her" (emphasis added). From a letter I received from a self-described witch, explaining why she converted to Wicca: "I enjoy it very much. I am no longer sad or lonely." From the New Age best-seller of Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations With God*: "Passion is God wanting to say 'hi.' . . . You need no outside authority to give you direction, no higher source to supply you with answers. . . . If you look to see what you feel about it, the answers will be obvious to you, and you will act accordingly." From the back cover of Lynn Grabhorn's popular self-help book, *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting*: "With no effort other than paying attention to how we're feeling, we can mold our lives exactly as we choose with relative ease and speed."

The assumption common to all is that a monstrous idol of cold deliberation has all of us in its thrall. We must break the shackles of rationality and burst the doors of thought to bask in the warm, clear light of our feelings.

The morality of feelings comes in several varieties. First, there is the morality of ecstatic feelings, or Romanticism. Ecstatic feelings take us out of ourselves, out of our minds, out of control. As Shelly wrote in *Prometheus Unbound*:

> *The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!*
> *The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,*
> *The vaporous exultation not to be confined!*
> *Ha! Ha! The animation of delight*
> *Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,*
> *And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.*

The key to this passage is the rhyming association of "madness" with "gladness." Shelley finds madness attractive; it excites him. I suppose even Shelley was not mad enough to practice it continuously in every dimension of life. But madness does not easily compartmentalize, because chaos leaks through the walls from one compartment to another. Committed Romantics understand this. You will get nowhere by warning them about the consequences of their behavior, because the risk of utter ruin merely increases that sense of the wild, the mad, and the uncontrollable that so attracts them. Most Romantics are not committed; they are merely naive. Mere weekend Romantics, they think that they can abandon themselves to the winds and yet somehow wind up with a good job, a stable family life, and the man or woman of their dreams.

More radical is the morality of morbid or forbidden feelings, which we might call Transgressivism. As an adjective, "transgressive" is new, but the attitude that it describes is not. Consider the fascination of writers like Edgar Allen Poe with the morbid and unnatural. The same fascination with morbidity appears in the homosexual movement, the Goth cult, the Dungeons and Dragons game, the fashions of the late Gianni Versace, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In his novel *That Hideous Strength*, C. S. Lewis said this about the terrible attraction of the forbidden:

> It is idle to point out to the perverted man the horror of his perversion: while the fierce fit is on, that horror is the very spice of his craving. It is ugliness itself that becomes, in the end, the goal of his lechery; beauty has long since grown too weak a stimulant. . . . The terrible fascination suck[s] and tug[s] and fascinate[s] . . . [it is a] movement opposite to Nature . . . [an] impulse to reverse all reluctances and to draw every circle counterclockwise.

The inversion of values, this transgression for transgression's sake, is where all Romantics come if they follow the Romantic path to the end. It makes perfect sense, because if the feeling that you crave comes from crossing normal boundaries, then eventually you will have to cross the boundaries of normal feeling.

Then there is the morality of irresistible feelings, supposedly inexorable predispositions to feel a certain

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way. We usually call this Determinism. Romantics and Transgressives are usually viewed as rebels against scientific rationality, but today some scientists seem to be abandoning rationality itself. Having prostrated themselves before the idol of mechanism in general, at last they kneel before the mechanism they suppose to inhabit themselves. Considering themselves merely cat's-paws of genes, of hormones, or of neural circuitry, they declare in an unintended parody of Martin Luther, "So I feel; I can do no other." Once this attitude takes hold, it makes irresistible feelings attractive even to people who have no Romantic leanings, just because it gives them an excuse for whatever they want to do. When challenged about their choices, all they have to say is, "I can't help how I *feel*, and I *feel* I have no choice."

A good example can be found in the notorious article of evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker, "Why They Kill Their Newborns." Pinker is a soft Determinist, as most Determinists are. He doesn't think that the act of infanticide is irresistible. But he does think that the emotions that predispose a young mother to it are irresistible, so that we ought to view baby murder leniently. He writes of two young women who killed their infants, one a college girl, the other college-bound. With her boyfriend's help, the first left her dead child in a hotel dumpster with multiple fractures to the skull. The second delivered her child in a toilet stall, strangled him, then stuffed him in a garbage can before returning to the prom. Pinker says only that "the laws of biology were not kind" to these mothers; because of the way that the "emotional circuitry" of women has evolved in an "unforgiving world," mothers naturally kill babies who are born at the wrong time. How does he describe their state of mind? They "feel they [have] no choice."

The morality of pleasant feelings is quite simple: seek pleasure and avoid pain. In its individualistic form, this is Hedonism; in its social form, Utilitarianism. Hedonistic themes have been enormously successful in advertising, as in the following ad for Nike running shoes:

> We are Hedonists and we want what feels good. We are all basically Hedonists. That's what makes us human. And we were made to want pretty simple things: Food. Water. Shelter. Warmth. And pleasure. We want what feels good. . . . If it feels good then just do it.

To be sure, the philosophical versions of Hedonism and Utilitarianism are more sophisticated than "If it feels good, just do it." They aim at maximizing *net* pleasure, summed over the long term, so they forgo some pleasures because of the pains that accompany them. Epicurus, the founder of Hedonism, is said to have lived a quiet life.

But this doesn't mean that the morality of pleasant feelings is safe. Consider Peter Singer, the Ira B. DeCamp professor of bioethics at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton, touted by the *New Yorker* as "the most influential living philosopher" and by the president of Princeton as "the most influential ethicist alive." The foundation of Singer's Utilitarianism is seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. But he notices that animals feel pleasure too, and some of them may even have stronger feelings than some humans. A variety of consequences follow. Cattle should not be killed for the pleasure of diners, because it hurts the cattle. Defective babies may, though, be killed for the pleasure of their parents, because babies don't feel much anyway and because defectives cost society more pleasure than they give. A human being may have sex with a calf, but only so long as both enjoy it. He should not have sex with a chicken, because it usually kills the chicken. And so it goes.

The morality of higher feelings, or Aestheticism, received a powerful endorsement from John Stuart Mill. Mill always considered himself a Utilitarian, but he recognized the limitations of any philosophy that was unable to tell the difference between the pleasure of a pig, cooling off in the mud, and the pleasure of Socrates, hot on the trail of the true, the good, and the beautiful. In the end, he decided that although maximizing net social pleasure really is the only thing that matters, some pleasures are "higher" than others. Not only that, he decided that the difference between the higher and lower pleasures is not merely quantitative, but qualitative. It isn't just a difference in amount, as if one viewing of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* were better than two enjoyments of a hot fudge sundae, while three hot fudge sundaes might tip the balance the other way. No, the higher pleasure is higher *absolutely*. Just one glimpse of the Vermeer is worth the sacrifice of galaxies of sundaes.

But the philosophy that Mill embraced is as problematic as the one that he rejected. If he was not a monster it is only because his age took nothing to its conclusions, whereas we live in an age that takes everything to its conclusions. While the morality of pleasant feelings ends with the likes of Peter Singer, who thinks *little* humans may be killed because their pleasures aren't *big* enough, the morality of higher feelings ends with the likes of Hannibal Lecter, who thinks *vulgar* humans may be killed because their pleasures aren't *refined* enough. It is all part of the same revolution.

The morality of religious feelings, or Spiritualism, has rarely been as popular as it is today. We have seen its two main forms already. One is the exaltation of feel-

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ing as the very voice of holy God, the means by which He speaks. But from exalting religious feelings, to exalting feelings in themselves as religious, is a shorter step than we realize. It was Keats who gave classic form to the latter notion: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination. . . . I have the same idea of all our passions as of love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential beauty." Plainly he attributes to "affections," that is, to feelings, the attributes of holiness and creative power that belong to God alone.

The pop culture version of the Keatsian ethic is epitomized in the New Age writings of Neale Donald Walsch. Walsch quotes God as telling him "Mine is always your Highest Thought, your Clearest Word, your Grandest Feeling." A little later God tells him "The Grandest Feeling is that feeling which you call love." Still later God tells him that love is not a particular feeling but "the summation of all feeling." The climax comes on the page where He tells him, "My purpose for you is that you should know yourself as Me." There is a lot more of such faddle, but the meaning is clear. Whatever you feel is holy, because you are God, and God lives in what He feels.

Last but not least, there is the morality of moral feelings, or Moralism. It is too bad that this one has had so much less cultural influence than the other moralities of feelings, because it is head and shoulders above them. Yet it too is fatally flawed.

James Q. Wilson, its most eminent defender, identifies the four main moral feelings as sympathy, duty, self-control, and fairness. He means by them pretty much what the rest of us do; the only puzzle is why he insists upon viewing them as feelings. For example, he defines duty as "the disposition to honor obligations even without hope of reward or fear of punishment." But dispositions are not feelings but virtues, and obligations are not feelings but objective relationships between persons. He defines self-control as the ability to defer the "immediate and tangible" for the sake of the "future and uncertain," but something is wrong here too, for surely the ability to resist one's feelings is not a feeling. In the end, the morality of moral feelings turns out to be an attempt to represent an eyrie full of eagles as one goose. The rich palette of traditional ethics, with different colors for moral laws, moral virtues, moral feelings, and moral relationships, is stirred and blurred and mixed until but a single muddy color remains—moral feelings. Though Wilson's book *The Moral Sense* is helpful for its abundant cross-cultural data and its respect for common sense, at times it reads a bit as though it were written in George Orwell's Newspeak. The words that you need just aren't there.

Feelings are not unimportant. They give charm and energy to our lives, and even the unpleasant and inconvenient ones provide us with information. The problem is that the charm is not self-evaluating, the energy is not self-directing, and the information is not self-interpreting. We should not be like the Stoics, sad men who took counsel with each other to rid their souls of feelings—but neither should we make feelings our masters.

This would seem to be an obvious point. Then what gives the morality of feelings its appeal? A clue to the appeal of the morality of feelings is that in each of its varieties it avoids the language of moral *law.* Wilson is perhaps most blunt about this; he says that he writes about moral feelings because there are no moral laws. Of all the varieties of the morality of feelings, the only one that does make much use of the language of laws is Determinism, and it speaks not of moral laws, but of biological ones. The importance of this little difference is very great. As Determinists conceive it, biological law is impersonal—a dead regularity that applies to things that live. To some people, a dead regularity is rather comforting. However it may control us, it cannot make demands on us; on the contrary, it exempts us from demands. But law in the strict sense—in the *moral* sense—is personal. Rather than exempting us from demands, it is in its nature a demand. It is an instruction, framed by reason, ordained to the common good, and addressed to an intelligent and free agent by Someone who has authority to tell him what to do. Only one being has that kind of authority over the whole of human life: the one who designed us, who made us, and who knows what our life requires.

Although our feelings are a part of our inbuilt design, what the moralities of feelings try to do is make sense of them in terms that are alien to design—in terms that diminish, or dilute, or deny our dependence on the One who inbuilt and understands it. Rather than asking what place feelings have in the big picture, they make feelings themselves the big picture. In a word, the moralities of feelings are forms and expressions of our rebellion against our Maker.

So long as rebellion appeals to us, all its forms and expressions will also appeal to us. The critic's hope is that the relationship might also run the other way—that if by God's grace we can be brought to reconsider the forms and expressions of our rebellion, we might eventually be brought to reconsider the rebellion itself.

This may seem a slim hope, because intellectual defense and critique so often become just another game. But the Christian faith honors hope as a virtue, and slim hope is hope nonetheless.

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No End in Sight

Carl E. Olson

Only two more *Left Behind* books to go and we'll finally know how the world ends. I can hardly wait. I feel fortunate that I live at a time when someone finally figured out what the Book of Revelation *really* means. That someone is Tim LaHaye, creator and coauthor of the *Left Behind* novels, the best-selling works of Christian fiction—ever. As a surprisingly kind story in *Time* ("Meet the Prophet," July 1, 2002) explained, LaHaye "believes that the Scriptures lay out a precise timetable for the end of the world, and the *Left Behind* books let us in on the chronology." Since the first book was published in 1995, the series has sold nearly forty million copies. The most recent addition, *The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon*, had a first printing of 2,750,000 copies. That's a serious number of people learning the secrets of the Book of Revelation. Unfortunately for them, the secrets are stale, recycled, and false.

My skepticism results from having spent twenty-five years learning and hearing the teachings of popular "Bible prophecy experts"—more formally known as premillennial dispensationalists— such as LaHaye, Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, and countless others. Reading quotes by *Left Behind* enthusiasts who are convinced The End is nigh, I recall how many "Ends" have come and gone in my short lifetime. The "signs of the times" were many and varied: the fledgling modern state of Israel, any and every Middle Eastern conflict, the European Market, Jimmy Carter, the energy crisis, Ronald Reagan, communism, the Persian Gulf War—the list goes on. Of course, September 11 was no different. Within hours, the event was being examined by Bible prophecy teachers and enthusiasts in light of the Book of Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Matthew's Gospel. There were the remarks, made in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Other fundamentalist leaders also took up the "I told you so" posture. Todd Hertz, in a September 19, 2001 article in *Christianity Today*, quotes Jack Van Impe, noted Bible prophecy guru and TV evangelist: "I have been warning the nation and the world . . . for the past two years that terrorists would soon strike America. That moment has arrived. Jesus predicted this rise of terrorism just before his return to set up his kingdom on earth."

Of course, the inevitability of it all—"Jesus predicted *this* rise of terrorism"—makes such a warning a rather moot point. How does one turn back biblical fate? Paul Boyer, author of the excellent *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief In Modern American Culture* and an insightful observer of the apocalyptic culture in America, says, "I suspect that with the passage of time these events will be assimilated into the prophecy popularizers' end-time scenario, as everything is." It will be an interesting assimilation since the exact role, if any, the United States plays in dispensationalist end-time scenarios is vague. The standard belief is that the United States—apparently of little interest to the biblical prophets—will suffer a rapid decline in fortune, the victim of a massive stock market implosion and the uncontrolled rise of hedonism and secularism. Some interpreted the September 11 attacks as key events in the fast-approaching decline and fall of the American Empire. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that a North Carolina pastor has linked the attacks in New York City to Isaiah 30:25, which speaks of "the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." And the irrepressible John Hagee, a fervent premillennial dispensationalist and best-selling author based in San Antonio, flatly states: "I believe World War III actually began Sept. 11, 2001." Of course, Hagee made similar comments after Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995, but that's already ancient history.

September 11 provided the sort of horrific material that mixes well into the potent dispensational brew of sensationalism, biblical sooth-saying, and sci-fi storytelling. Dispensationalism is a theology of crisis, without much patience for peace and ordinary life. It has never been about the growth and advancement of civilization; its adherents tend to stay off to the side, looking for their chance to triumphantly announce to the masses, "I told you so!" when times turn bad.

Thirty years ago, when the world was threatened by the Cold War and the nation divided by the Vietnam conflict, an unknown youth minister named Hal Lindsey shocked the publishing industry by selling several million copies of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, the biggest selling nonfiction work of the decade (with sales now totaling close to forty million). At that time the forces of evil were as obvious as the printed Word of God—or so Lindsey said. They were those aligned against Israel and Christianity: the Soviet Union, Egypt, China, and "Mystery Babylon," a one-world religion fast forming around an eclectic blend of astrology, narcotics, ecumenism, and the Catholic Church. For several years it was a winning combination.

But the late 1980s were not kind to the movement. Longtime dispensational strongholds such as Fuller Theological Seminary, BIOLA (the Bible Institute of Los Angeles), and even Dallas Theological Seminary, long considered the spiritual and academic heart of the movement, began distancing themselves from the more popular, rigid forms of the controversial theological system. Lindsey's thinly veiled prophecy that the 1980s would bring the Rapture and the end of the world

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(hence his 1981 bestseller *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*) failed to materialize. This was followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, making Lindsey's "deduction" in the early 1980s of a possibly imminent Communist takeover appear naive and paranoid. Suddenly the world found itself relatively safe, with freedom spreading and pessimism relegated to the trash heap of history. A new age of tranquillity had arrived and dispensationalism seemed out of fashion.

But there's nothing like a war to light the apocalyptic fires once again. Of course, it couldn't be just any war; it had to involve the Middle East, home to Israel, the central and essential entity of the dispensational system. For Lindsey and his many imitators, Israel was not simply a lone democracy in a part of the world known for despots and totalitarian regimes—it was the "key to the prophetic puzzle." Israel was also, Lindsey wrote, "the Fuse of Armageddon." Its reestablishment as a nation in 1948 meant that the prophetic clock, on pause since the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, was about to restart with a bang. The Persian Gulf War was the breath of fresh air that the gasping dispensational movement needed.

Suddenly, within a few weeks, the prophetic iron went from cool to red-hot. Who would strike it? Among many others, John F. Walvoord, former president and longtime professor (now retired) at Dallas Theological Seminary, made the most of the opportunity. Although widely respected in the dispensationalist community for his relatively sober and academic work, Walvoord had never tasted the sort of success Lindsey was accustomed to. However, his publisher, Zondervan, was up to the task. Smelling sales, the fundamentalist publishing house dusted off his 1974 book, *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis*, and republished it in 1990. Within a year it had sold over a million copies.

Although Walvoord still gave Russia her due, the focus of popular dispensationalists had turned to the Islamic world, especially Iran and Iraq. Saddam Hussein became the most likely candidate for the position of Antichrist; Gorbachev, Reagan, and a host of lesser-known potential "Men of Sin" were long-forgotten. "Babylon" was no longer a code word for the Catholic Church or a worldwide system of apostasy (although it would still be all of that, dispensationalists said); it *really was* Babylon—ancient Babylon—rebuilt and renewed by a murderous Iraqi dictator. The driving force behind the intended destruction of Israel was not communism, but radical Islam. The ancient battle between Jacob and Esau had resumed. Lindsey and others such as Grant Jeffrey, Tim LaHaye, and John Hagee unearthed passages of Scripture supposedly proving this prophetic truth. Their books during the 1990s pointed to the growth of terrorist groups operating with the goal of destroying Israel and Israel's powerful supporter, the "Great Satan," the United States.

The horrific attacks on America seemed to validate, to a certain degree, these authors' repeated warnings about militant Islamic groups. But popular dispensationalists are not content with validation—they apparently *want* Armageddon and the end of the world. It's difficult to conclude otherwise. Just read some of the book titles of the past few years: *Armageddon, Countdown to Armageddon, Israel's Final Holocaust, Final Signs, Beginning of the End, Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption, Apocalypse Now, The Final Battle.* Instead of interpreting and analyzing current events in the light of political, cultural, and social realities—a complex and difficult task—the authors of these books interpret Scripture according to currents events, an approach that is as dangerous as it is subjective. That's the approach taken by LaHaye, whose goal with the *Left Behind* books is to disseminate his understanding of the Book of Revelation to as large an audience as possible. He writes in *Revelation Unveiled*, "The Book of Revelation is easily the most fascinating book in the Bible, for it gives a detailed description of the future." In his 1970s commentary on the Book of Revelation, *There's a New World Coming*, Lindsey explained that modern readers could finally understand John the Revelator's mysterious work because it "is written in such a way that its meaning becomes clear with the unfolding of current world events." However, not just anyone can understand the Apocalypse, but only those embracing the dispensationalist system as taught by Lindsey, LaHaye, and a select group of other enlightened Bible prophecy experts. The key is the dispensational system—without it one simply cannot "rightly divide the Word of God."

Thus dispensational eschatology becomes a litmus test for orthodoxy. Rejecting the system raises questions about one's commitment to biblical inerrancy, literal interpretation of Scripture, and the belief in the pretribulation Rapture. In addition, those less than enthusiastic about dispensationalism are suspected of antagonism towards Israel. Lindsey has made it clear that those who do not embrace dispensationalism are especially vulnerable to anti-Semitism. The "allegorical" method of interpreting Scripture—badly misrepresented and maligned by most dispensationalists—is roundly condemned for draining all meaning from the Bible. A-millennialism, generally embraced by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and most Protestants, is denounced as heretical, even demonic.

The fact is that authors such as LaHaye and Lindsey teach that the vast majority of Israelites will be killed during the seven years of Tribulation sandwiched between the Rapture and Christ's Second Coming. "There will be so much fighting" around Jerusalem, Lindsey writes, "[that] blood will flow for two hundred miles." He acknowledges that this is hard to believe, but

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states that this "is exactly what God predicts, and He always fulfills His Word." In other words, this supposed friend of the Israelites believes that God has willed the bloody death of millions of Jews—simply because He must keep His word. Prophecy isn't for the weak of heart, but someone has to let the world know.

Dispensationalism's popular leaders could not be more confident of their own prophetic powers. They vehemently deny this is the case, but what other conclusion can one reach after reading their books? Commenting about the Book of Revelation in *The Apocalypse Code*, one of his more recent works, Lindsey remarks, "I believe that the Spirit of God gave me a special insight, not only into how John described what he actually experienced, but also into how this whole phenomenon encoded the prophecies so that they could be fully understood only when their fulfillment drew near. . . . I prayerfully sought for a confirmation for my apocalypse code theory." In the introduction to his subsequent work, *The Final Battle*, Lindsey makes another audacious claim:

> You won't find another book quite like this one. We will examine why and how the world is hurtling toward disaster. . . . My background as a student of prophecy allows me to place all this information in perspective in a way that is sure to lead many people to the ultimate truth about the coming global holocaust—and, if they are open, to a wonderful way of escaping it. Read this book. Learn from it. Pass it on to your friends. It may be the last chance some of them will ever have to avoid the horrible fate this book describes.

This pragmatic, matter-of-fact pessimism is both the source of dispensationalism and, oddly enough, the cause for its flourishing within so many fundamentalist groups. John Nelson Darby, the ex-Anglican priest who constructed the premillennial dispensational system in the 1830s, based it on three premises: Jesus Christ failed in his initial mission, the Church has become apostate and is in ruins, and the Old Testament promises to the Israelites have yet to be fulfilled. Inevitably and logically this meant that the Church is not connected to Old Testament Israel, nor is she even as important, at least in earthly terms. The Church is, Darby taught, a "heavenly people" meant for a Christ who was relegated to a heavenly status once he was rejected by the Jews, God's "earthly" people. Fast forward to the future millennial reign, complete with a new Temple and reinstituted animal sacrifices. During this "Davidic reign" the Church will exercise authority from heaven—possibly in a huge, cubed New Jerusalem hovering over the earth. Meanwhile, the earth will be occupied by those non-Raptured and non-glorified believers, mostly Jewish, who accepted Jesus as Savior during the Tribulation. After all, that horrific time will be for punishing an evil humanity and will be a means of bringing the Jews back to God in an ultimate display of tough love. How odd to think that Christians who believe that the Church is composed of "Jew and Greek" alike (Romans 10:12) are sometimes suspected of anti-Semitism by those who believe that in the future, earthly millennium the Jews will be rewarded with earth while pre-Rapture Christians will achieve heaven, the grand prize.

The popularity of such a system does not exist despite its pessimism, but feeds off it, as the success of the *Left Behind* books seems to indicate. Once the doctrines of the utter depravity of man and his inevitable slide into ever-increasing evil are accepted, the desire for escape and the hope of God's vengeful judgment naturally follow. Instead of being incarnational, history becomes fatalistic; instead of being sacramental, the material realm is cursed, even evil. This dualism is both startling and familiar, neo-Gnostic and Manichaean. While fighting against the "New Age" movement and its dualistic errors, dispensationalists unwittingly embrace a similar error, pitting the spiritual against the physical and the heavenly against the earthly, as though they were never reconciled in the person of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul may have fought his flesh—his fallen, wounded nature—but he never tried to escape the physical pains his commitment to Christ brought upon him. Undoubtedly the idea of a pretribulation Rapture would have angered him: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). You don't see that on too many bumper stickers.

Even as dispensationalism's discontinuity with centuries of historical Christian teaching is being exposed, its selling power continues to impress. The *Left Behind* books have mushroomed into an entire industry, replete with CDs, tapes, videos, comic books, apparel, calendars, and a thriving website community. Sales for the books increased by 60 percent after September 11. There is no doubt that apocalyptic fever is easily caught and passed along in America. So don't be surprised if the *Left Behind* series extends its successful run to fourteen, fifteen, or twenty books. After all, The End is approaching, but the presses will keep on turning until the final seconds of time vanish into eternity.

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How Not To Overturn *Roe v. Wade*

Paul Benjamin Linton

An aside in Justice Antonin Scalia's recent article, "God's Justice and Ours" (FT, May), provides a useful and timely reminder that efforts to overrule *Roe v. Wade* through "personhood" litigation are doomed to failure. In the course of his article (which focuses on the morality of the death penalty), Justice Scalia writes: "My difference with *Roe v. Wade* is a legal rather than a moral one: I do not believe . . . that the Constitution contains a right to abortion. And if a state were to permit abortion on demand, I would—and could in good conscience—vote against an attempt to invalidate that law for the same reason that I vote against the invalidation of laws that forbid abortion on demand: because the Constitution gives the federal government (and hence me) no power over the matter."

Several organizations, including the National Foundation for Life and the Texas Justice Foundation, have undertaken litigation that is intended to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and establish the legal personhood of the unborn child. The National Foundation for Life (NFFL) modestly describes its litigation strategy as the "Global Project." This strategy suffers from many analytical and methodological errors, not the least of which is the notion, central to the ongoing federal litigation in New Jersey (the *Donna Santa Marie* case now on appeal in the Third Circuit), that a woman who has been coerced into having an abortion has no legal remedy under the state's wrongful death statute when, in fact, such a remedy clearly exists under current law—either a common law action for battery or, if state actors are involved, a federal civil rights action, which the Supreme Court itself approved of in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992). And for those women who have *not* been coerced into having an abortion (which is to say virtually *all* women who undergo abortions), how can it be said that *their* rights (as opposed to their children's rights, discussed below) have been violated? The essential shortcoming of this type of litigation, however, is that it aims at persuading the Justices of the Supreme Court of the existence of a fact—that the unborn child is a developing member of the human family from the moment of conception—with which they already are familiar.

The unstated premise of those who have adopted this strategy is that the Justices do not understand the nature of abortion, and that if they are forced to confront the scientific and medical facts about the conception and development of the unborn child, they will be compelled to reconsider *Roe v. Wade* and hold that the unborn child is a constitutional person. To speak in spiritual terms, the critics assume that the problem lies in the intellect rather than the will. That premise is mistaken. Every member of the Court understands what an abortion is. If there was any doubt about this before, the Court's decision in *Stenberg v. Carhart* two years ago, striking down Nebraska's partial-birth abortion law, should have laid that doubt to rest. The majority opinion's cold and clinical description of various abortion methods betrays no ignorance of the nature of abortion. The Court understands that the purpose and effect of an abortion is to kill an unborn (and, in some instances, a partially born) child. Whatever reservations some members of the *Carhart* majority may have about the morality of abortion in general or the partial-birth technique in particular, those reservations have not affected their collective judgment that women need abortion to be legal in order for them to be full and equal members of American society. It is that judgment, and not any misunderstanding of what happens in an abortion, that is the source of our present predicament, as even a casual perusal of the Court's opinion in *Casey* reaffirming *Roe v. Wade* would disclose.

Instead of meeting head-on the Court's rationale for adhering to the abortion liberty, the NFFL veers off in a different direction, arguing for the "personhood" of the unborn child. But by now, it should be clear that no member of the Court—past or present—believes that the unborn child is a "person," as that term is used in Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment. Seventeen justices have sat on abortion cases since and including *Roe*, and not one has ever stated that the unborn child is a constitutional person. Neither then-Justice William Rehnquist nor the late Justice Byron White, both of whom dissented in *Roe*, took issue with the Court's holding that the unborn child is not a constitutional person. Both Justices, then and later, recognized the states' authority to legislate in this area. Dissenting in *Roe*, Justice Rehnquist stated that "the drafters did not intend to have the Fourteenth Amendment withdraw from the states the power to legislate with respect to this matter [i.e., abortion]." Dissenting in both *Roe* and *Doe v. Bolton*, the companion case to *Roe*, Justice White stated that "this issue [i.e., abortion], for the most part, should be left with the people and the political processes the people have devised to govern their affairs."

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No present or past Justice has ever taken the position that the unborn child is, or should be regarded as, a "person" as understood in the Fourteenth Amendment, including the late Justice White, perhaps the most eloquent critic of *Roe v. Wade*. And in the *Carhart* case, the Court refused even to consider Nebraska's argument that a partially born child is a constitutional person. That question was rejected for review without dissent. So much for the naive notion of "forcing" the Court to take on the personhood issue.

But there is more than silence to indicate the Justices' views. Dissenting in *Casey*, Justice Antonin Scalia stated, "The states may, if they wish, permit abortion-on-demand, but the Constitution does not *require* them to do so." This statement, in an opinion that Chief Justice Rehnquist, Justice White, and Justice Clarence Thomas joined, quite obviously is not compatible with a recognition of personhood. And in dissenting from the Court's decision to strike down the Nebraska partial-birth abortion ban, Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices Scalia and Thomas once more urged that the issue of abortion be returned to the states.

In his brief dissent in *Carhart*, Justice Scalia stated that "the Court should return this matter to the people—where the Constitution, by its silence on the subject, left it—and let *them* decide, state by state, whether this practice should be allowed." Justice Thomas, writing for himself, Chief Justice Rehnquist, and Justice Scalia, began his lengthy dissent by stating: "Nothing in our Federal Constitution deprives the people of this country of the right to determine whether the consequences of abortion to the fetus and to society outweigh the burden of an unwanted pregnancy on the mother."

Entirely apart from the issue of personhood, there is little basis for believing that any of the Justices would accept the argument that the Supreme Court (or any court) is qualified to state when human life begins. Dissenting in *Casey*, Justice Scalia, joined by the Chief Justice and Justices White and Thomas, wrote that the question of when human life begins is not "a legal matter" capable of resolution by a court, but, instead, is "a value judgment" that may be made only by the political branches of government. In his concurring opinion in *Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health* (1990), Justice Scalia said that the determination of when human life begins is a question not capable of judicial resolution and instead must be left to the political process where compromise and accommodation of divergent views is possible. This theme—that the resolution of the abortion question should be left to the political branches of government—has been a leitmotif of Justice Scalia's abortion opinions.

The immediate objective of the NFFL's strategy is to compel New Jersey and a handful of other states to recognize wrongful death actions for unborn children where such actions are not currently allowed. But this objective, to the extent that it is intended to challenge *Roe*, is also misdirected. Nothing in *Roe*, properly understood, forbids New Jersey or any other state from imposing civil liability and/or criminal sanctions on anyone who causes injury to or the death of an unborn child (outside the context of abortion). Indeed, many more states recognize such civil actions (and punish such crimes) now than before *Roe* was decided. One might go further and argue that the Constitution should forbid one person (the pregnant woman) from being able to consent to the injury or death of another person (her unborn child), but that assumes a state of affairs in which *both* persons are entitled to the protection of the Constitution. For the reasons set forth above, no federal court is going to hold that New Jersey (or any other state) must extend its wrongful death statute to unborn children on either equal protection or due process grounds, regardless of whether their death occurs as a result of abortion or otherwise.

But if the NFFL strategy is pursued, several federal courts will hold, as *Roe* did and as the Third Circuit already has in an earlier failed attempt of the "Global Project," *Alexander v. Whitman* (1997), that the unborn child is *not* a constitutional person ("the short answer to plaintiffs' argument is that the issue is not whether the unborn are human beings, but whether the unborn are constitutional persons"). These decisions, none of which has been (or is likely to be) reviewed by the Supreme Court, simply reinforce the positivist legal principle that having the attributes of humanity is not enough to entitle one to the protection of the law. That result, in my judgment, would be most regrettable.

Roe may be (and we must hope and pray *will* be) overturned some day, either by a Court decision returning the issue to the states or by a constitutional amendment. But most assuredly it will not come about through an effort like the NFFL's "Global Project," which simply diverts scarce pro-life resources into a quixotic venture destined to fail. Justice Scalia's recent restatement of his view that the Constitution does not speak to the issue of abortion at all should serve as a much needed wake-up call to those who think otherwise.

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Another Islam

Michael Novak

Beginning in the thirteenth century, the three monotheistic religions parted ways, with the Jewish and Christian world going in one direction and the Islamic world going in another. We are still coming to terms with that split.

But the three faiths still hold more in common than we typically recognize today. For example, Islam (like Judaism and Christianity) has a powerful sense of the transcendence of God—His majesty, His greatness, His incomparability with anything else. You see this in the Muslim's abject bow at prayer, head lowered to the ground.

There is a sentence in the Psalms that says that the whole world, the whole vastness of the stars and everything else, is to God but a grain of sand. The whole world is insignificant. That's a way of saying how great God is. The purest single note in Islam is this greatness of God, and the appropriate human response to it is "yes." "Islam" means submission: "Yes."

T. S. Eliot says that the most beautiful single line in all of human poetry is in Dante: *E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace.* "In His will, our peace." That's a Christian and a Jewish expression of the relationship of humans to God. It sounds like submission, doesn't it? "In His will, our peace." Sometimes we are told that Islam means "peace." It does mean peace, *if* you submit to His will. And it sounds as though that's very similar to the Jewish and Christian "In His will, our peace." Mutual understanding can begin from there.

Difficulties in understanding arose in part because Muslim scholars interpreted Plato and Aristotle in such a way that they became convinced that God's greatness and transcendence is so superior to us that God couldn't be bothered with this grain of sand, with this changeable world in which there are seasons, upheavals and erosions, historic transformations and individual contingencies. God is concerned with necessary things, the things that are eternal, the things that stay the same. His will is not affected by all the things that happen on our level of existence.

Focusing on God's transcendence is Islam's great strength. Its weakness is that it can say little about human liberty, and about how human choice affects the will of God. How can God allow for human freedom? How can God permit human choice? It's as though medieval Muslims imagined liberty to be a zero-sum game. If humans have it, God doesn't. If God has it, humans don't. It's a philosophical problem they couldn't resolve.

Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writings thus divided, first of all, over the role of liberty in the relations between God and man. So great is God that in the Islamic view He overpowers human liberty. This suggests a kind of determinism. What God knows and does is eternal and necessary and can't be changed, and no individual will, no knowledge of singulars or contingency, is possible to God. He doesn't concern himself with things like us, and you can't talk about human beings as images of God.

"Man and woman He created them," that much is clear in Genesis. "In the image of God He created them." For Jews and Christians, human beings are made in the image of God. For Islam, to conceive of an image of God is to fall very short of, even to falsify, His greatness. To speak of images of God is blasphemy. It marks one as an infidel—one who has not seen the point, and is in denial about the inconceivable greatness of God.

The second cause of separation flowed from the first: the tendency toward a doctrine of double truth. God is light, unchanging, eternal. Muslim scholars couldn't discern a way, philosophically, to deal with contingency and changeable things, such as human beings changing their minds and following their own vocations. And so they had one set of truths to which philosophy led them, and another for talking about reward and punishment as the Koran does. The Koran seems to talk about the ethical life, and it allows for a certain degree of human liberty. But Muslims described that truth as "allegory"—that is, something other than philosophical truth. Their way of solving the problem was thus not to solve it, but rather to say it's insoluble. Christians and Jews, by contrast, adopted a different solution. If "x" happens, then God eternally willed it. God knows necessary things necessarily and contingent things contingently.

The third difference between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand and Islam on the other had to do with what theologians call the unicity of intellect. Islamic thinkers thought they were following Aristotle, but they were not. With Aristotle, they had come to believe that each of us has two kinds of intellect. One is the "potential" intellect, by which we are open to understand all things. We receive impressions of the world, we take things in. But then there is an active, questioning, almost aggressive intellect, which goes out raising questions, deploying logic, calculation, and abstraction. This drive was then called the "active intellect."

Some Islamic scholars took the view that while we each have a potential intellect—we are all receivers—there is really only one potential intellect in the world: the Divine intellect. They reasoned that when, as a fruit of inquiry

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or investigation, we have an insight, we come to share in an understanding that others have shared before.

One difficulty with this interpretation is purely epistemological. If there is only one potential intellect for all, then it alone possesses all knowledge, and individuals would not have to discover knowledge for themselves. This is completely contrary to experience. Another difficulty is that this way of analyzing the act of understanding diminishes human liberty. It deprives human beings of their own personal acts of understanding. We are no longer creatures capable of individual insight and choice, the kind of creatures that the stories of Judaism and Christianity require.

Every story in the Bible is a story of how human beings use their will. Sometimes they say "yes" to God, sometimes "no." King David in one chapter is faithful to his Lord, and in the next he is not. The suspense is always, "What will he do next?" And so the axis of every story in the Bible is the arena of human will. It is the most important theater of action in the world. In this arena, God offers human beings friendship: Will they accept it or not? That's the drama of history. That drama hinges on human liberty, our capacity to say "yes" or "no." The Jewish and Christian story is that God created the whole cosmos so that somewhere in it would be a creature with whom He could share His love or His friendship. And to human beings He offered His friendship, as to no other creature. That's why human beings have a dignity beyond any other creature. That's why the death of a cockroach or a fly presents no moral crisis—no wrong against the natural order, in which all things come to be and then perish. Yet the untoward death of humans is somehow a violation of the order of things.

God wants the friendship of free people, not slaves; we must be free to say "yes." "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," begins the Gospel of John. So freedom is at the heart of the Jewish and Christian story in a way that it is not at the heart of the Islamic story.

The Jewish and Christian story also unleashes human dynamism. In the eleventh century, the shoulder harness for horses and oxen was invented in the West. There was also the invention of the rear rudder for steering ships and the invention of mariners' tools for plotting one's position on the earth, which enabled men to go out on the ocean. There was the invention of eyeglasses and of magnifying glasses, as well as cogs and wheels that make watches and clocks possible. There was a sudden explosion of innovations—what's called the first Industrial Revolution of the eleventh century—that starts making Western civilization the equal of Islam.

The fact that the people of the West believed that all humans are made in the image of God meant that they understood themselves to be called to create, to invent, to discover, to figure out how all things work. And the result was the great thrust of modern science, modern technology, the invention of a new form of political science, the process of "modernization," and the invention of economics. Jews and Christians took joy in discovery. For them, work was a vocation; it was to be, in some sense, God-like.

In light of this history, how should Christians of good will respond to Islam today? The United States is now home for a great many Muslims. They are our fellow citizens. All of us have been thrown into a worldwide struggle for our own survival against terrorists. That's a fresh reason—but not the only reason—why it's our task to see if there are resources shared by Islam, Judaism, and Christianity that can help us to revisit those three ancient problems—the transcendence of God, human liberty, and truth.

Above all, we must speak for the rights of women in Islam and the poor within Islamic countries. We must help create the conditions for economic prosperity, democracy, and human rights in the Islamic world. When we speak of human rights, we cannot mean only American rights. We mean the rights of all humans, including the rights of Muslims.

We need to give voice to those rights. We would be unfaithful to ourselves if we did not. We should listen for echoes of this voice in the Islamic world. We saw the joy in Afghanistan when people were liberated from the Taliban. We see in Iran today young people taking to the streets in the name of freedom.

There is a widespread desire everywhere to have human rights declared, protected, and advanced. The world we should work for in the decades just ahead is a world in which Muslims, like every other people on this planet, are free to worship as conscience directs them; a world in which Muslims, like every other people, are free to inquire and study and write and speak; a world in which Muslims, like every other people, escape from poverty by the millions, and find abundant opportunity to employ their immense wealth of God-given talents to make a better Earth; a world in which Muslims, along with all other peoples, are free to practice the arts of democracy, civility, and all the fundamental human rights that are endowed in every man and every woman on this earth by our Creator, Who is One, and Who is Great. May His name be praised, in, by, and through liberty for all.

Michael Novak *is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. A longer version of this essay was given at a conference called "Truth and Freedom: Toward a Common Understanding Among Muslims, Jews, and Christians," sponsored by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.*

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Terrorists Behind Bars

Charles Colson

It is a telling—and alarming—sign that following September 11, 2001 the two failed terror attacks involved people who were drawn to Islam while serving time in prisons.

Jose Padilla, now known as Abdullah al-Muhajir, the man accused of plotting to build a "dirty bomb," had been in and out of America's prison system, where he was influenced by Islamic inmates. Richard Reid, the failed "shoe bomber," was converted to Islam in a British prison by a radical imam—one who was later suspended by British authorities for "inappropriate conduct."

Both are chilling reminders of the on-going threat of terrorism. If not for the good work of our intelligence officers (and the alertness of the airline passengers who subdued Reid) we might now be adding hundreds more names to the list of American terror victims. Both cases are reminders, as well, of what fertile fields prisons are for cultivating terrorists.

That both Padilla and Reid were influenced in prison did not surprise me. I have visited over six hundred prisons the world over; in most I've encountered Muslims. The majority are peace-loving men who were drawn to the brotherhood and who cared only about following Islamic worship and dietary laws. But I've also seen thousands of angry inmates smoldering to "get even" with the society that put them behind bars. It's these men radical Islam has in its conversion crosshairs—and it's these men we need to worry about.

A visit I made to the Michigan City State Penitentiary in Indiana a few years ago illustrates why. Michigan City is an old, decaying institution. The stale, rancid odor so common in prisons is particularly pungent here; the concrete floors are pockmarked with depressions reflecting the wear from decades of shuffling feet; paint peels from the bars of the cells. Many inmates are locked into the maximum-security wing, where they're allowed out just one hour a day; others await execution. As you stand looking up at the catwalks, the cellblocks appear endless.

Into this terrifying maze we herd hundreds of humans. They feel that the only way they can express their humanity is to rebel, snap back at a guard, or yell at one another—anything to break the dreadful, mindless tedium of marching in and out for meals and work assignments.

On the day of my visit, heat rose in waves from the dirty concrete floors. Most of the inmates had their shirts off; many were clad only in undershorts. I walked from cell to sweltering cell greeting the men. In most prisons, inmates approach the bars, shake hands, and talk to me. But on this day in this one wing, as many as one-third would not. They wore hard, angry expressions; their head apparel identified them as Muslims.

Later, visiting with men in the prison yard, I put my hand on someone's shoulder—something I've done routinely in prison. This time, my hand was slapped away by an inmate seething with anger. Again, he was Muslim.

In a way, I could understand. I remember from my own time in prison the despair of being locked up, not knowing how long the incarceration would last. Add to the confinement the physical deprivation, the isolation, the separation from family, the anger over the flagrant disparity in sentencing (anger justified in the case of blacks who are sentenced more harshly for crack, their drug of choice, than are whites for the same amount or more of cocaine), the indignities visited upon the inmates—all these things feed a prisoner's resentment, his sense of victimization.

I left Michigan City realizing that the rage was as deeply imbedded as the dirt and the stench—rage against me and against the society that, in the prisoners' eyes, put them in that hole. I remember thinking that if you wanted to recruit terrorists—people who would like nothing better than to destroy American society—you couldn't find better recruiting stations than prisons like these. Angry inmates are ripe for terrorist plucking—and radical Islamists know it.

According to published reports, radical Islamists—Muslims who follow a rigid interpretation of the Koran called Wahhabism—have put a high priority on reaching disaffected inmates around the world and recruiting them for their own deadly purposes. The *Washington Times* quotes an al-Qaeda training manual that identifies as "candidates" for recruitment those who are "disenchanted with their country's policies," including convicted criminals. The article quotes a U.S. corrections official who acknowledges that Americans behind bars are "literally a captive audience, and many inmates are anxious to hear how they can attack the institutions of America."

In Spain, England, and France, while the authorities went after separatist and nationalist extremists, "the al-Qaeda network recruited members, often using local . . . prisons," notes the *New York Times*. In Paris, "prison is a good indoctrination center for the Islamic radicals, much better than the outside," a French Interior Ministry official told the *Times* last December. "There are about three hundred Islamic radicals in prisons in Paris,

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and they spend a lot of time converting the criminals to Islam."

In England, several radical imams have been expelled from their prison "ministries." Among them was the imam who instructed Richard Reid, removed after he was caught ranting anti-American rhetoric, cheering on the Trade Center hijackers and referring to America as "a big devil."

In the U.S., just two weeks after the September 11 attacks, Muslim Chaplain Aminah Akbarin at New York's Albion Correctional Facility was put on paid administrative leave after telling inmates that Osama bin Laden should be hailed as "a hero to all Muslims" and that the terror attacks were the fault of President Bush.

It's no accident that radical Islam's influence is growing behind bars here in America. The National Islamic Prison Foundation (NIPF) was specifically organized to convert American inmates to Wahhabism. The Washington-based Center for Security Policy (CSP) reports that the NIPF is one of more than two dozen interlocking groups that together form a huge, nationwide network of outreach programs, funded with hundreds of millions in Saudi Arabian money. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, many of these groups have been raided, closed, or had their assets seized. Thor Ronay, executive vice-president of CSP, says there are many complaints from prisoners that those who run the NIPF programs bully more moderate followers of Islam; their literature disappears from prison libraries and their adherents are intimidated.

Radical imams are not the only problem. I recently spoke with an Islamic leader who said he was not as concerned about the imams as he was about hotheaded inmates who convert to Islam. With no one to moderate them, he said, "they could become dangerous."

This news should surprise no one. The teachings of Islam were, after all, written by Muhammad in the middle of a war. We can appreciate that most Muslims view jihad as simply an internal struggle, but we cannot fault those who read the Koran literally—especially if they convert behind bars.

Consider: You're black, and you believe you're being oppressed by the white power structure. Along comes a person of color who invites you to join the brotherhood—the most appealing aspect of Islam in prisons—and offers you a means of striking back at your oppressors. If, on top of that, prisoners are taught that the more aggressive they are, the more favor they gain with Allah, you have a dangerous mix.

How can we prevent the transformation of petty criminals into professional terrorists? Prison officials must be vigilant, but balanced. They need to be on the lookout for anyone preaching violence, and they ought to run out anyone, Christian or Islamist, who condones it. Court decisions give them sufficient legal authority to do this.

A generation ago, wardens were forced to deal with radical religious teaching involving both white supremacist and Black Muslim groups. In *O'Malley v. Brierley* (1973) prison officials were supported in preventing two priests from leading religious activities in a prison after they conducted what was described as an "Afro-American Mass" attended mostly by the prison's Black Nationalists and Black Panthers. The prison officials charged that the Mass had been a political rally, not a religious service, and that the priests' activities were likely to have incited violence. According to the Becket Fund, a nonprofit legal institute that litigates on behalf of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, "the court held that in determining whether the inmates' rights had been violated, state authorities were to be held only to a reasonableness test and were not required to prove that presence of clergymen constituted a clear and present danger to the prison."

Elsewhere, courts suggested that there is no violation of free exercise when restrictions stem from a reasonable concern about preventing violence and hatred. In an important 1969 case (*Knuckles v. Prasse*) the Third Circuit Court of Appeals held that so long as services in prison were of a religious nature, Muslim prisoners could have visitations by Muslim ministers and worship services that prison authorities could monitor; but if Muslim gatherings in prison proceeded along nonreligious lines and defiance of authority became the message of such gatherings, prison authorities might cancel the communal worship and ministerial visitation privileges.

Of course, these cases were decided decades prior to the passage of the recent religious liberty statutes, which have yet to be fully tested in the courts. But those statutes are unlikely to change settled law. Prison Fellowship is deeply committed to the religious rights of all prisoners, which is why we lobbied hard for the passage of these laws; we must be watchful that prison officials not be arbitrary in their actions. But it is never a legitimate religious expression for clergy to preach violence, be they Christians advocating abortion clinic bombings or imams advocating suicide bombings.

What's the answer? This gets to the heart of what Prison Fellowship is all about: bringing the gospel into the prisons and telling inmates that in Christ their sins are forgiven. I've seen the result firsthand: when the gospel is preached, and the men embrace Christ, they eschew violence. The prisons run by PF prove it. In Texas, Kansas, Iowa, and Minnesota, these prisons are filled with once-angry, dangerous men who now love the Lord and live new lives. Their success is measured in dramatically reduced recidivism rates.

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That's the long-term answer; the short-term one is keeping the promoters of terror out of our prisons and away from the inmates they would exploit.

Charles Colson *is the founder of Prison Fellowship.*

Teachers' Guilt

Gregory Roper

In the middle of the fall semester, I find myself thinking back to the end of another school year, for it was the time that changed my teaching for good—and, I believe, for the better. It was May, and I was driving across the Midwest on my annual pilgrimage to the International Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, to deliver a paper about fourteenth-century penitential manuals and their influence on Chaucer. But my mind was back in Maryville, Missouri, on a freshman class in composition that had just ended.

It had been a terrible class. The twenty-five students had, with only a couple of exceptions, done poorly; worse, they had been the definition of recalcitrance, resisting everything I had tried to teach them, and had become downright surly by the end of the semester. It had gotten to the point where I had given them a fairly simple set of materials to learn, and said, "Look, this is basic and crucial to what we're doing. I'm going to quiz you on this every day until I'm sure you can pass it, and it will be the first third of the final exam." A majority of the students flunked it every time, and even flunked it on the final.

I had been warned by colleagues before the semester began. This was the "Intro to Composition" class, yet it was in the Spring semester—"off sequence," as they say. In other words, the students I met in January had either flunked the course in the fall, or had just emerged from the remedial "foundations of composition" course that attempted to get them up to speed where they could take this class. But I didn't have much choice—the new, tenure-track prof teaches what he's assigned without grumbling, and in my hubris, I had brushed the worries aside. I was still a young teacher, the kind who could connect with his students and work with them on their level. This was what I *did*, after all, and I was known for my energetic classroom presence. I was the one who had students over to his house, gave innovative assignments, and tried unusual things. Once, in my second year of teaching, I had even gone to the dormitory to find a student who had been skipping my class. I had never had that scorn taught in graduate school for the art of teaching; if anything, I put much more energy into my teaching than my research.

So there I was driving across the Midwest after the semester and wondering what had gone wrong. Why had this class crashed so badly, been such a failure for both the students and me? I was angry, confused, disturbed. I began replanning the class from the ground up: better assignments, more personal meetings with the students to discuss their papers, having them assemble portfolios of writing. It would be a lot more work—the research would have to be put off again—but that's what a teacher does, I thought.

Yet somewhere in Illinois the thought occurred to me that the problem was with the ideas I was importing into my pedagogy. I believed that the students' learning was somehow primarily my responsibility; I had somewhere imbibed the notion that if I were just passionate enough, energetic enough, prepared enough, creative enough—if I worked hard enough, got to know my students well enough, and presented the material in a fresh enough way—that I could reach every student. I would be able to teach the student, not the subject, and transform his life.

What I discovered was that I thought of my students as innocent and malleable, uncorrupted, unspoiled, and it was only my task to light the fire in their souls. Even though I was a conservative in so many other areas of my life, I discovered to my shock that I was, in my pedagogical philosophy, still the liberal I had been at age eighteen.

And I realized immediately the harm that this had done. I was full of hubris; I was exhausting myself, and I was, unaware of it, condescending to my students.

I believe many in the teaching profession are in this state, and that our popular ideology of the teacher pushes them in this direction. In films such as *Stand and Deliver* or *To Sir, With Love*, in books and television and popular images, we see the teacher as the good liberal: the secular, good-hearted, amazing transformer who, through sheer will, preparation, and energy, can overcome human nature and make his students into something new.

What occurred to me as I crossed Illinois was quite simple, and yet profound: *it wasn't my fault.* I had taught those students well; I had given them the same assignments, the same pep talks, the same advice and instruction that I had given numerous sections of the very same course many times before, and *they rejected it.* That is, I had something—well, something like grace to offer them, and they had, in their human freedom, chosen not to take what I had to teach them. It was a tremendously liberating discovery, this notion that students, rather than being angels, were sinful humans. Now I was no longer trying to invent new paradigms for my

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teaching, come up with better assignments, more innovative ways to grade and assess their progress so I could help them more. Instead, I decided that I would begin the next semester making clear my new discovery: that students are responsible for their own learning, and that, if they were going to do well, they would have to accept this responsibility as adults and perform well.

Now I do this at the beginning of every class. My students get a set of "Principles of a Roper Class," and the first one is: "It's time to take responsibility." The second is: "You have to practice to improve." I no longer consider every student's failure to be my own and every bad class to be the fault of my lack of preparation. By accepting that students have free will, and in fact are shot through with original sin, one comes to the conclusion that even the best of students at times can get lazy, or turn aside from proffered good—in fact that all students will do it at one time or another, and that this in no way impugns the worth of the teacher offering the grace of new learning. I relax now; I do my best to offer my students what I can, but I no longer take it so personally. It is humbling and yet reassuring to discover one is not a miracle worker. I find that I am happier, too: less hurt by their failures, but also more rejoicing, because less hubristic, about their successes.

I wonder how many of the problems in our schools—especially, but not limited to, the problem of teacher burn-out—come from this faulty theology, a theology I am convinced is the very air breathed in most education colleges and departments today. For secular liberal pedagogy not only creates a teacher exhausted from struggling daily to overcome human nature, but it also does nothing to insist that students take primary responsibility for their own education, a debilitating and ultimately demeaning position.

We see today, those of us who teach at the college level, a disturbing number of these students, sad young men and women who have gone through twelve years of school with the attitude that it is someone else's fault if they fail—and we occasionally talk to parents who have apparently supported their children in this mistaken notion. As I think back to my truly excellent teachers, they were not the exhausted, earnest ones, but the ones who presented the material with scholarly excellence and demanded we take up the charge to discover it, master it, own it for ourselves. I had been a pretty good teacher, and in many other ways a theological conservative, and yet it took me about eight years of teaching—and one terribly horrendous class—to discover this. Perhaps we could do a great deal to help teachers *and* students by instructing teachers in the depredations of this liberal pedagogical theology. Once we give it the boot, we might find happier and healthier teachers, and better educated students.

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The Hour of the Laity

Mary Ann Glendon

Throughout the twentieth century, leaders of the Catholic Church implored lay men and women with increasing urgency to be more active as Catholics in society, and—since Vatican II—to become more involved in the internal affairs of the Church. The earlier call found a warm response among Catholic Americans in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. But as Catholics gained in affluence and influence, the lay apostolate has suffered, while new opportunities for service in the institutional Church have gone begging. No wonder that John Paul II, with his history of close collaboration with lay men and women, often refers to the laity as a "sleeping giant." For decades, the giant has seemed lost in the deep slumber of an adolescent. Now that the sleeper is beginning to stir—roused by media coverage of clerical sexual misconduct—it is beginning to look as though the Leviathan has the faith I.Q. of a pre-adolescent. Can this be the long-awaited "hour of the laity"?

The current resurgence of interest in lay organization suggests that the time is ripe to explore what has happened to American Catholics' understanding of the lay vocation over the years during which they made unprecedented economic and social advances. Are the sixty-three million or so Catholics who comprise over a fifth of the U.S. population evangelizing the culture, as every Christian is called to do, or is the culture evangelizing them?

Since poets and novelists often help us to see things afresh, I propose to approach that question through a lens borrowed from an acute literary observer of the modern world. The protagonist of Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Storyteller* is arguably not a person, but a group—a nomadic tribe of rainforest-dwellers. To outsiders, they are known as the Machiguengas, but they call themselves the people-who-walk. The reader never meets the Machiguengas face to face; we only hear of them from a narrator who is trying to find out whether the tribe still exists. We learn that from time immemorial, the stories and traditions of the people-who-walk were remembered, enriched, and handed down by *habladors*—storytellers. These stories helped the tribe to maintain its identity—to keep on walking no matter what, through many changes and crises. But as the rainforest gave way to agriculture and industry, the Machiguengas scattered. For a time, their *habladors* traveled from one cluster of families to another and kept them bound together. The storytellers "were the living sap that circulated and made the Machiguengas into a society, a people of interconnected and interdependent beings." But anthropologists think that the storytellers eventually died out, that the Machiguengas were absorbed into cities and villages, and that their stories survive only as entertainment. The narrator suspects otherwise, and the drama of the novel comes from his effort to find out whether it is really true that a mysterious red-haired stranger has become the *hablador* of the Machiguengas so that they will not lose their stories and their sense of who they are.

That problem—the problem of how a dispersed people remembers who it is and what constitutes it as a people—lies at the heart of the challenges confronting the *Ecclesia* (which may be translated as "the people-called-together") in America. Catholics are constituted as a people by the story of the world's salvation, and part of that story requires them to be active in the world, spreading the Good News wherever they are. The people-called-together are called to witness, and to keep on witnessing no matter what, in and out of season. How well have American Catholics done at keeping that story alive through the crises, changes, temptations, and opportunities they encountered in the mission territory that is the United States?

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From the beginning, Catholic settlers in North America were strangers in a Protestant land. At the time of the Founding, several states had established Protestant churches. Congregationalism, for example, was the official religion of Massachusetts until 1833, and in many New England towns the Congregational meeting house was the seat of town government as well as the place of Sunday worship. Nevertheless, when Alexis de Tocqueville surveyed the American social landscape in 1831, he predicted that Catholics would flourish there. The growing Catholic presence would prove beneficial for the young nation's experiment in self-government because, he argued, their religion made them "the most democratic class in the United States," since it imposes the same standards on everyone, rich and poor, and it leaves its followers free to act in the political sphere.

The French visitor, far-sighted as he often was, never suspected that a storm was gathering as he wrote those words. He failed to detect the anti-Catholicism that would fuse with nativism and erupt into violence as Catholic immigrants arrived from Europe in ever-increasing numbers. In 1834, an angry mob in Boston (the city he had regarded as America's most civilized) burned an Ursuline convent to the ground while police and firemen stood by and watched. Three years later, arsonists destroyed most of Boston's Irish quarter. Similar atrocities were repeated across the country. But the expanding economy demanded cheap labor, and the immigrants kept arriving from Ireland, Italy, Germany, French Canada, and Eastern Europe. By the turn of the century, the Roman Catholic Church was the country's largest and fastest growing religious community, with twelve million adherents.

Struggling for survival in a hostile environment, the immigrant Catholics built their own separate set of primary and high schools, hospitals, and colleges. Picking up on the American penchant for associating, they formed countless fraternal, social, charitable, and professional organizations. Protestants had the Masons and the Eastern Star, Catholics had the Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabella. Through dogged effort and sacrifice, they constructed, in historian Charles Morris' words, "a virtual state-within-a-state so Catholics could live almost their entire lives within a thick cocoon of Catholic institutions." From their neighborhood bases in northern cities, the newcomers used democratic political processes to win political power at the state and local level. But when the Catholic governor of New York ran for President in 1928, virulent anti-Catholicism broke out again. Al Smith's resounding defeat reinforced the Catholic sense of separateness through the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

Interestingly, the period when Catholic Americans were most separate was the time when they were most active—as Catholics—in the world. In 1931, on the fortieth anniversary of the historic social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI called for Catholic action to counter the transformation of society along Communist or Fascist lines. "Nowadays," he wrote in *Quadragesimo Anno*, "as more than once in the history of the Church, we are confronted with a world which in large measure has almost fallen back into paganism." He told the lay faithful that they must "lay aside internal quarrels" so that each person could play his role "as far as talents, powers, and station allow" in a peaceful but militant struggle for "the Christian renewal of human society." Laypersons were to be "the first and immediate apostles" in that struggle, he said. The response of Catholics in this country was all that the Pope could have wished. They were instrumental in curbing Communist influence in the labor movement, and they made the Democratic party in the urban North into the party of the neighborhood, the family, and the workingman.

The Spanish philosopher George Santayana, who taught at Harvard in the early twentieth century, was intrigued by the contrast between what he perceived as a buoyant, optimistic American culture and the ancient Catholic faith, with its "vast disillusion about this world and minute illusions about the next." He wrote in 1934 that Catholics in the U.S. had no serious conflicts with their Protestant neighbors because "their respective religions pass among them for family matters, private and sacred, with no political implications." If Santayana had spent less time in Cambridge and more in Boston, he would have realized that the Catholicism of urban immigrant communities was not at all "private"; it was merely enclosed in the neighborhoods. Those were the decades when lay Catholics were intensely involved, as Catholics, in the parish, the workplace, and the precinct. It was also a time when the people-called-together was blessed with an abundance of storytellers. In parochial schools, at Mass and devotions, and around their kitchen tables, Catholics were constantly reminded of who they were, where they came from, and what their mission was in the world.

But as St. Paul told the Corinthians, "The world as we know it is always passing away." As Catholics climbed up the economic and social ladder, they left the old neighborhoods for the suburbs. Parents began sending their children to public schools and to non-Catholic colleges. Vocations to religious life declined. Geographic and social mobility scattered Catholic communities of memory and mutual aid as relentlessly as agriculture and industry pushed back the rainforest of the Machiguengas. By the 1960s, the nation-within-a-nation had dissolved and the diaspora had begun.

The people-called-together thus embarked on what Morris well describes as "the dangerous project of severing the connection between the Catholic religion

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and the separatist . . . culture that had always been the source of its dynamism, its appeal, and its power." The transition was symbolized by the election to the presidency of a highly assimilated Catholic, John F. Kennedy, who matched the nativists in the vigor of his denunciation of public aid to parochial schools. The 1960 election taught ambitious descendants of immigrants that all doors could be open to them so long as they were not too Catholic.

Two years later came the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the Church's historic effort to meet the challenges of bringing the gospel to the structures of the modern, increasingly secularized, world. The Council fathers, realizing that the cooperation of the laity would be crucial, sent strongly worded messages to lay men and women, reminding them that they are the front line of the Church's mission in society, and that, wherever they find themselves, they must strive to "consecrate the world itself to God." But events underway in the United States and other affluent countries would make it harder than ever for such messages to get through. The breakdown in sexual mores, the rise in family disruption, and the massive entry of mothers of young children into the labor force amounted to a massive social experiment, an unprecedented demographic revolution for which neither the Church nor the affected societies were prepared.

In those turbulent years, pressures intensified for Catholics to treat their religion as an entirely private matter, and to adopt a pick-and-choose approach to doctrine. Many of their *habladors*—theologians, religious educators, and clergy—succumbed to the same temptations. In that context, it was not only difficult for the strong demands of Vatican II to be heard; the messages that did get through were often scrambled. In an important sense, all the most divisive controversies of the post-conciliar years were about how far Catholics can go in adapting to the prevailing culture while remaining Catholic.

Though American society was rapidly becoming more secular, certain cultural elements of Protestantism remained as strong or stronger than ever: radical individualism, intolerance for dissent (redirected toward dissent from the secular dogmas that replaced Christianity in the belief systems of many), and an abiding hostility to Catholicism. For the upwardly mobile Catholic, assimilation into that culture thus meant acquiescing in anti-Catholicism to a degree that would have astonished our immigrant ancestors. But that's what all too many of us did. In the 1970s, Andrew Greeley observed that "of all the minority groups in this country, Catholics are the least concerned about their own rights and the least conscious of the persistent and systematic discrimination against them in the upper reaches of the corporate and intellectual worlds."

In this observation, as in his early warnings about child abuse and the growth of a homosexual subculture among the clergy, Father Greeley was on the mark. I regret to say that I was a case in point until my consciousness was raised by my Jewish husband. In the 1970s, when I was teaching at Boston College Law School, someone took down all the crucifixes from the walls one summer. Though the majority of the faculty at the time was Catholic and the Dean was a Jesuit priest, not one of us entered a protest. When I told my husband, he was shocked. He said, "What's the matter with you Catholics? There would be an uproar if anyone did something like that with Jewish symbols. Why do Catholics put up with that kind of thing?" That was a turning point for me. I began to wonder: Why *do* we Catholics put up with that sort of thing? Why did we get so careless about the faith for which our ancestors made so many sacrifices?

In many cases, the answer lies simply in the desire to get ahead and be accepted. But for most Catholics of the American diaspora, I believe the problem is deeper: they no longer know how to talk about what they believe or why they believe it. The people-called-together have lost their sense of who they are and what they were called to do.

And they seem to have lost a lot of mail as well. How many lay people, one wonders, have read any of the letters that popes have addressed to them over the years? For that matter, how many Catholics can give a sensible account of basic Church teachings on matters as close to them as the Eucharist and human sexuality, let alone the lay apostolate? If few can do so, it is not for lack of communications from Rome. Building on *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, the fathers of Vatican II reminded the lay faithful that it is their particular responsibility "to evangelize the various sectors of family, social, professional, cultural, and political life."

These have been constant themes of Pope John Paul II. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, to take just one example, he renewed the call to the social apostolate, emphasizing "the preeminent role" of the laity in protecting the dignity of the person, and asking "both men and women . . . to be convinced of . . . each one's individual responsibility, and to implement—by the way they live as individuals and as families, by the use of their resources, by their civic activity, by contributing to economic and political decisions, and by personal commitment to national and international undertakings—the measures inspired by solidarity and love of preference for the poor." He spelled out the implications of the lay vocation for contemporary Americans with great clarity in Baltimore in 1995: "Sometimes witnessing to Christ will mean drawing out of a culture the full meaning of its noblest inten-

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tions. . . . At other times, witnessing to Christ means challenging that culture, especially when the truth about the human person is under assault."

Now that the "sleeping giant" is beginning to show signs of regaining Catholic consciousness, the Church is going to have to reckon with the fact that the most highly educated laity in its history has forgotten a great deal about where it came from. Meanwhile, as with any emerging mass movement, activists with definite ideas about where they would like it to go are eager to capture the giant's strength for their own purposes. In recent months, American Catholics have heard vague but strident calls for "structural reform," for lay "empowerment," and for more lay participation in the Church's internal "decision making." Dr. Scott Appleby, for example, told the American bishops in Dallas that "I do not exaggerate by saying that the future of the Church in this country depends on your sharing authority with the laity."

There has also been much talk about the need for a more independent American Catholic Church. "Let Rome be Rome," said Dr. Appleby. Then there is Governor Frank Keating, chosen by the bishops to head their National Review Board, who proclaimed, astonishingly, at his first press conference that, with respect to the role of the laity, "Martin Luther was right." The Voice of the Faithful, an organization formed in 2002 by Boston suburbanites, states as its mission: "To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church." (One has to wonder just what spirits had been consulted when a leader of that group boasted excitedly to the *Boston Globe* that "the mainstream Catholics, all sixty-four million of them," were speaking through Voice of the Faithful's convention this past July.)

There is nary a sign, thus far, that these spokesmen have a sense of the main job the Gospels tell Christians they were placed on earth to do. Even the late Basil Cardinal Hume, hardly a reactionary in church matters, took pains to caution an earlier reform-minded group, the Common Ground Initiative, against "the danger of concentrating too much on the life within the Church." "I suspect," he said, "that it is a trick of the Devil to divert good people from the task of evangelization by embroiling them in endless controversial issues to the neglect of the Church's essential role, which is mission."

By leaving evangelization and the social apostolate out of the picture, many lay spokespersons are promoting some pretty basic misunderstandings: that the best way for the laity to be active is in terms of ecclesial governance; that the Church and her structures are to be equated with public agencies or private corporations; that she and her ministers are to be regarded with mistrust; and that she stands in need of supervision by secular reformers. If those attitudes take hold, they will make it very difficult for the Church to move forward through the present crisis without compromising either her teachings or her constitutionally protected freedom to carry out her mission.

Much of that careless talk simply reflects the fact that, with the decline of Catholic institutions, the actual experience of the lay apostolate has disappeared from the lives of most Catholics—along with the practical understanding of complementarity among the roles of the different members of the mystical body of Christ. It is only common sense that most of us laypeople are best equipped to fulfill our vocations primarily in the places where we live and work. It is because we are present in all the secular occupations that the Vatican II fathers emphasized our "special task" to take a more active part, according to our talents and knowledge, in the explanation and defense of Christian principles and in the application of them to the problems of our times. John Paul II elaborated on that theme in *Christifideles Laici*, pointing out that this will be possible in secularized societies only "if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work, and society an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the gospel." Those are the main messages of all those letters that most of us have not read or answered. And those are the messages that are notably absent from the statements of spokespersons for the lay groups that have formed over the past few months.

As memories of the lived experience of lay apostolate faded, the lay ministry expanded in the post-Vatican II years. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Catholics came to believe that the principal way to be active as Catholics is to participate in the internal life of the Church. Those who began clamoring for more such participation in 2002 seem unaware that they are battering on an open door. The Church has long been beseeching lay men and women to come forward and assume positions at all levels. No one should complain, however, if bishops and priests are reluctant to give posts of responsibility to dissenters who want to use such positions to change basic church teachings. No good shepherd will invite wolves to look after his flock.

Needless to say, the Church will need to undertake far-reaching reforms in order to move beyond the present crisis, and many of the recent calls for reform are coming from well-intentioned men and women. Most Catholics are deeply and rightly concerned about the recent revelations of clerical sexual abuse; they want to do something about the havoc wrought by unfaithful priests; and they are grasping at the slogans that are in

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the air. But slogans about "structural reform" and "power-sharing" did not come from nowhere. Aging members of the generation of failed theories—political, economic, and sexual—have seized on the current crisis as their last opportunity to transform American Catholicism into something more compatible with the spirit of the age of their youth. It is, as Michael Novak puts it, their last chance to rush the wall.

Southern writers such as Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy saw where those warped visions could lead American Christianity long before most of the rest of us did. The antihero of O'Connor's *Wise Blood* sets himself up as a preacher of the Church of Christ Without Christ. Percy's 1971 novel, *Love in the Ruins*, is set in some not-too-distant future when the American Catholic Church has split into three pieces: the patriotic Catholic Church with headquarters in Cicero, Illinois, where "The Star Spangled Banner" is played at the elevation of the Host; the Dutch Reformed Catholic Church founded by several priests and nuns who left to get married; and "the Roman Catholic remnant, a tiny scattered flock with no place to go." While matters happily have not reached that point, it is noteworthy that the two most salient themes of self-appointed lay spokespersons during the 2002 crisis have been in those directions: the desire for a more American Church free of hierarchical authority, and the desire for a do-it-yourself magisterium free of hard teachings regarding sex and marriage.

Meanwhile, like Paul of old, John Paul II keeps sending those pesky letters reminding what he generously calls the faithful that Christians must not conform to the spirit of the age, but must seek to do what is good, pleasing, and perfect in the sight of God. For the umpteenth time, he explains that "it is not a matter of inventing a 'new program.' The program already exists: it is the plan found in the gospel and in the living Tradition; it is the same as ever." One might think those messages would at least be picked up and amplified by those Catholics whose profession it is to figure out how to mediate the truths that are "ever ancient and ever new" under changing social conditions. But the fact is that far too many American Catholic theologians, trained in nondenominational divinity schools, have received little grounding in their own tradition. Far too many religious education materials are infused with the anger and disappointments of former priests and sisters who went to work in religious publishing because their training suited them for little else. And far too many bishops and priests have ceased to preach the Word of God in its unexpurgated fullness, including the teachings that are most difficult to follow in a hedonistic and materialistic society.

Derelictions on the part of so many *habladors* have left far too many parents poorly equipped to contend with powerful competitors for the souls of their children—the aggressively secular government schools and an entertainment industry that revels in debasing everything Catholic. I do not mean to suggest that failures of theologians, religious educators, bishops, and priests excuse the lapses of the laity. What I do mean to suggest is that we are in the midst of a full-blown formation crisis.

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus has said that the crisis of the Catholic Church in 2002 is threefold: fidelity, fidelity, and fidelity. He is right to stress that lack of fidelity has brought the Church in America to a sorry pass. But it also needs to be said that we are paying the price for another three-dimensional disaster: formation, formation, and formation (formation of our theologians, of our religious educators, and thus of parents).

The wordsmiths of the culture of death have been quick to exploit that weakness in the Church that has consistently been their most feared and powerful enemy. Thirty or so years ago, they came up with one of the most insidious slogans ever invented: "Personally, I'm opposed to (fill-in-the-blank), but I can't impose my opinions on others." That slogan was the moral anesthesia they offered to people who are troubled about moral decline, but who do not know quite how to express their views, especially in public settings. Only in recent years have some Catholics, Protestants, and Jews stepped forward to point out that when citizens in a democratic republic advance religiously grounded moral viewpoints in the public square, they are not imposing anything on anyone. They are proposing. That is what is supposed to happen in our form of government—citizens propose, they give reasons, they deliberate, they vote. It is a sinister doctrine that would silence only those moral viewpoints that are religiously based. But the anesthesia was very effective in silencing the witness of countless good men and women. And of course the slogan was a bonanza for cowardly and unprincipled politicians.

At this point, a person aware that faith illiteracy has always been common might ask, "What's so urgent about formation now?" The answer is that poor formation presents a special danger in a society like ours where Catholics have lost most of their old support networks, and where education in other areas is relatively advanced. If religious education falls short of the general level of secular education, Christians run into trouble defending their beliefs—even to themselves. They are apt to feel helpless when they come up against the secularism and relativism that are so pervasive in the general culture.

It is ironic, given their rich intellectual heritage, that so many Catholics feel unable to respond even to the simplistic forms of secular fundamentalism that are

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prevalent among America's semi-skilled knowledge class. Traditionally, it has been one of the glories of their faith that Catholics can give reasons for the moral positions they hold—reasons that are accessible to all men and women of good will, of other faiths or of no faith. Long ago, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Instruct those who are listening so that they will be brought to an understanding of the truth envisaged. Here one must rely on arguments which probe the root of truth and make people know how what is said is true; otherwise, if the master decides a question simply by using sheer authorities, the hearer will . . . acquire no knowledge or understanding and will go away empty." St. Thomas inspired Bartolomeo de las Casas, who denounced slavery and proclaimed the full humanity of aboriginal peoples in the sixteenth century, without direct reliance on Revelation. And Princeton's Robert George does the same today, in his philosophical defense of human life from conception to natural death. Recently, Dr. John Haas, the President of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, met with a well-known scientist who is engaged in human cloning. In the course of that meeting, the researcher told Dr. Haas that he had been raised an evangelical Protestant, but that at a certain point, "I knew I had to make a choice between religion and science, and I chose science." Dr. Haas' response, of course, was, "But you don't have to choose," and, like the good evangelist that he is, he began to expound the teaching of *Fides et Ratio*. A meeting that was supposed to last thirty minutes went on for hours.

John Paul II urges Catholics to emulate such examples when he says in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: "For Christian witness to be effective, especially in . . . delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special effort be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church's position, stressing that this is not a case of imposing on nonbelievers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person." To explain the reasons, however, means that one must know the reasons. "Be not afraid" does not mean "Be not prepared."

The time is overdue for Catholics (not only in America) to recognize that we have neglected our stewardship duties toward the intellectual heritage that we hold in trust for future generations. The question of why we have failed to keep that tradition abreast of the best human and natural science of our times—as St. Thomas did in his day—would be a subject for another occasion. Suffice it to note here that, in the twentieth century, that was the project of Bernard Lonergan and others, but the job has had few takers. Andrew Greeley's diagnosis is harsh: "American Catholicism," he says, "did not try intellectualism and find it wanting; it rather found intellectualism hard and decided not to try it."

Perhaps Greeley is too severe, but it is hard to disagree with theologian Frederick Lawrence when he says that "the Church's current activity in the educational sphere is not making sufficiently manifest how the basic thrust of Catholic Christianity is in harmony with full-fledged intellectualism, let alone that intellectual life is integral to the Church's mission." Lawrence goes on to say, "The Church today needs to proclaim loud and clear that understanding the natural order of the cosmos in the human and subhuman sciences, and in philosophy and theology, is part of appreciating God's cosmic Word expressed in creation. It is part and parcel of the fullness of the Catholic mind and heart."

American Catholics need to rededicate themselves to the intellectual apostolate, not only for the sake of the Church's mission, but for the sake of a country that has become dangerously careless about the moral foundations on which our freedoms depend. Tocqueville was right that Catholicism can be good for American democracy, but that can only happen if Catholicism is true to itself.

Is it possible that the scandal-induced surge of lay activity in 2002 foreshadows a season of authentic reform and renewal? If one is hopeful, one can discern here and there some encouraging signs. A number of newly formed lay associations, for example, are said to be forming study groups to read church documents, encyclicals, and the Catechism. The most promising sign of better times ahead, however, is the growing generation of unapologetically Catholic young people, including many young priests, who have been inspired by the heroic life and teachings of John Paul II.

Meanwhile, the world as we know it is still passing away. The demographic landscape of the United States is once again being transformed by immigration, this time mainly from the South. The vast majority of these newcomers have been formed in the Catholic cultures of Central and South America and the Caribbean. True, many of them have lost their story, but even so, they tend to have a Catholic way of imagining the real, of looking at the human person and society. At present rates, the United States will soon be the country with the third largest Catholic population in the world, after Brazil and Mexico. In the spring of 2002, while members of Boston's Voice of the Faithful were debating about church finances and governance, Boston's Latino Catholics were holding prayer vigils to affirm the solidarity of all the members of the mystical body of Christ—men and women, rich and poor, clergy and laity, and, yes, victims and abusers.

Wherever the sons and daughters of the American Catholic diaspora are to be found, one thing is certain. The people-called-together are searching for the stories that will help them make sense of their lives. The woman

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on the bus who pores over the astrological chart in the morning paper is looking for meaning. The professor worshiping this or that ideological idol is looking for a creed to live by and for. The opinion polls telling us that most Americans believe the country is in a moral decline, yet do not feel they can "impose" their morality on others, testify to the confusion that afflicts good people in times when "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

What if the scattered Catholic faithful were to remember and embrace the heritage that is rightly theirs? What if they were to rediscover the newness of their faith and its power to judge the prevailing culture? What an awakening that would be for the sleeping giant! As John Paul II likes to tell young people: "If you are what you should be—that is if you live Christianity without compromise—you will set the world ablaze!"

Is it fanciful to think that the people-called-together could rediscover the dynamic newness of their faith in their dispersed condition? Members of the Church's great lay organizations around the world do not think so. Even as mobility has sapped the vitality of many parishes, there has been a great upsurge—mostly outside the U.S. thus far—of lay associations, formation programs, and ecclesial movements. These groups, so varied in their charisms, so rich in storytellers, are providing a way for Catholics to stay in touch with each other and with their tradition under diaspora conditions. John Paul II has recognized the remarkable accomplishments of these groups in the area of formation, and has urged his brother bishops and priests to take full advantage of the potential they afford for personal and ecclesial renewal.

Until recently, like most American Catholics, I was relatively unaware of the extent and variety of these movements. It was only through serving on the Pontifical Council for the Laity that I came to know groups like Communion and Liberation, the Community of St. Egidio, Focolare, the Neo-Catechumenate Way, Opus Dei, and Regnum Christi, and became acquainted with many of their leaders and members. What a contrast between these groups that work in harmony with the Church and organizations that define their aims in terms of power! It is no surprise that the more faithful and vibrant the great lay organizations are, the more they are vilified by dissenters and anti-Catholics. But attacks do not seem to trouble them, for they know who they are and where they are going.

Finally, one of the great blessings of having a papacy and a magisterium is that they help to assure that the story of the people-called-together will be preserved, even in the most trying times. In Vargas Llosa's *The Storyteller*, an outsider comes to the dispersed Machiguengas, a man who loves the people-who-walk and their stories so much that he becomes their *hablador*. He is often on the road, traveling from family to family, bringing news from one place to the next, "reminding each member of the tribe that the others are alive, that despite the great distances that [separate] them, they still [form] a community, [share] a tradition and beliefs, ancestors, misfortunes, and joys." Among the many reasons to rejoice in the long pontificate of John Paul II is that, like the greatest of *habladors*, he has kept the story of his people radiantly alive, carrying it to every corner of the earth in one of humanity's darkest times. FT

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Proselytizing for Tolerance

Part I:
Paul J. Griffiths

Proselytism is a topic enjoying renewed attention in recent years. This is largely because it is increasingly obvious that religious commitments and conflicts are and will remain central to the reconfiguration of global politics that began in 1989. Understanding the proselytizing impulse is an important element in understanding the part that religion is playing in this reconfiguration, and there has recently been significant scholarly attention to it, most notably by Emory University's project on the problem and promise of proselytism in the new democratic world order. The events stemming from the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon will likely further focus attention upon the proselytizing aspects of religion.

But the desire better to understand the place of a resurgent Islam in global politics is not the only reason for closer attention to the grammar of proselytism in the U.S. Another is the parlous state of Supreme Court rulings on religion cases, a good part of which is brought about by confusion about the conditions under which proselytizing speech and activity are protected by the First Amendment, and, concomitantly, about whether there is any difference between religious and nonreligious proselytism.

We can begin with the now-archaic English noun "proselyte," a calque (rather than a translation) of the Greek *prosêlutos* and the Latin *proselytus*. The Greek noun is derived from the verb "to come" with a prefix meaning "over" or "towards," and so a literal etymological rendering of "proselyte" might be "one who comes over (from one location to another)." The term has a biblical use: there it always designates a Gentile convert to Judaism, or, more precisely, a Gentile who has begun to observe the Jewish law. In this case the "coming over" is from life as a Gentile to (or towards) life as a Jew.

The proselyte leaves an old community, whether of belief or practice, and enters a new one: in becoming one of Uncle Sam's proselytes you leave the community of non-U.S. citizens and enter that of American citizens; in becoming one of Christ's proselytes you leave the pagan community and enter that of the baptized; and in becoming one of David Hume's proselytes you leave the community of those who think the argument from design valid and enter the community of those who judge it invalid. These examples are meant to underscore that the new community, the one entered by the proselyte, may be one of thought as well as of practice—one ordered principally to the acceptance of theoretical commitments as well as one ordered principally to direct action in the world.

The proselytizer acts in such a way as to help create proselytes. Usually, he will do this in favor of a community to which he already belongs: proselytizers for the community of those who oppose smoking will likely be ex-smokers and almost certainly nonsmokers; proselytizers for the community of those who think that George W. Bush ought not be regarded as the legitimate forty-third President of the United States will ordinarily already belong to that community—and so on. Proselytizers usually, that is to say, want to turn the alien into kin.

Often, proselytizers will be motivated by the thought that it would be good for those still alien to become kin. Those wandering in the foreign lands of nicotine-addiction would be better off if they became kin to the righteous ex-smokers—or so it may be thought. But this proselytism of benevolence, undertaken for the perceived good of the potential proselyte, is often also mixed with a proselytism of fear and even hatred, one that wants to make the alien into kin not only (and perhaps not even

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primarily) for the alien's perceived good, but also for the protection of the home community. Thus, perhaps, those who proselytize the aliens who think that gay sex is an improper use of human sexuality on behalf of their kin who think it a good thing may be motivated by fear of what the aliens may do to their kin if they are permitted to remain alien. Proselytizing so motivated may usefully be called protective proselytism.

Particular proselytisms may also be further analyzed according to scope: Do they want to make proselytes out of everyone, or only out of a select few? I, for example, am likely to proselytize on behalf of the Chicago White Sox, but I'm interested principally in Cubs fans as potential proselytes. I won't waste my time on English relatives who know nothing about baseball. That's a limited proselytism. By contrast, I would like everyone to join the community of those who renounce the torture of children, and insofar as I proselytize on behalf of that community, my proselytism is universal.

Proselytisms may, finally, be analyzed according to the methods they prefer. Some coerce by use or threat of force, compelling the alien to come in as Augustine eventually decided was the only thing to do with the Donatists, or as the U.S. courts have decided it is constitutionally proper to do with Native American peyote-users; some attempt persuasion by argument; and some prefer to attract proselytes, if they can, simply by presenting to the world the life of the preferred community without persuasion or compulsion.

So much then, in brief, for the grammar and syntax of proselytism. It is important to see that the concepts informing particular proselytisms belong to the moral order. To engage in proselytizing implies a moral judgment of error (in assent) or impropriety (in action) on the part of the aliens being proselytized, and the consequent adoption of a course of action designed to bring the mistaken aliens into the fold of those who think rightly or behave properly. Particular proselytisms, then, imply (and are sometimes explicit about) the rightness or propriety of what they proselytize on behalf of, and, concomitantly, the wrongness or impropriety of what they proselytize against.

Proselytism, understood in this way, is virtually unavoidable: almost everyone is a proselytizer on behalf of something. Parents proselytize their children: indeed, parenthood is probably best understood as one long and usually unsuccessful attempt to create proselytes. Those with political or ethical or theoretical commitments almost always proselytize on behalf of them: every academic dispute is an instance of proselytism at work. And, of course, religious people often (but not always) find proselytism deeply inscribed into the grammar of their religious commitments. It may be possible for those almost or entirely without connection to others (hermits, those at the far end of autism or Alzheimer's, long-term coma patients, and so on) to avoid proselytism completely; but otherwise we are all proselytizers. Being such is inseparable from having a social existence.

The grammar and syntax of toleration is in many ways the obverse of that of proselytism, and this is no accident because the modern understanding of the term developed in large part in self-conscious opposition to and rejection of particular religious proselytisms. By the late seventeenth century, certainly, it is common in English political and philosophical writing to find toleration opposed to proselytism, and to the detriment of the latter. But before turning to the attempt to reject proselytism in favor of toleration, a few words about the history and root meaning of the verb (transitive and intransitive) "to tolerate" and the substantive "toleration" will be helpful.

The transitive form of the verb has as its root meaning (as also is true of the Latin *tolerare*) "putting up with" or "enduring" or "bearing something unpleasant." This meaning survives when we say that some trees tolerate drought better than others, or that some people can tolerate a surprising amount of suffering. A minor extension of this fundamental sense makes it possible to use the verb to denote the action of permitting or letting be something unpleasant or undesirable. I can, in this sense, tolerate your pipe-smoking so long as you don't do it in my car. Or, I tolerate my allergies because I find that attempting to medicate them away is worse than allowing them free rein. In all these cases, what is tolerated is something unpleasant or incorrect or improper or otherwise difficult.

The substantive "toleration" then denotes the action (and the theoretical commitments that inform such an action) of putting up with or permitting or letting be some pattern of action or belief found by those practicing toleration to be false (if a belief) or improper (if an action). Like proselytism, toleration in this sense has no special relation to religious matters. But in the seventeenth century, in both England and America, "toleration" became a term of art in legislation designed to ensure that the state and its citizens would indeed put up with—let be—religious practices and beliefs they found objectionable. And while the broader senses of the term are certainly still in play, this special sense of application to religion is probably dominant in legal circles, and to some extent in philosophical ones as well. And even when restricted to religious belief and action (however such a restriction is understood), the root sense of enduring or putting up with something undesirable is clear. John Locke, for example, in whose writings on toleration may be found the classic defense of the topic as applied to religious questions, is abundantly clear that this is what it means to tolerate religion.

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Those who tolerate and advocate toleration, like those who proselytize and advocate proselytism, do so for a variety of motives and with a variety of goals, but it would detain us too long to sort them through. I'll note only, as a point to return to, that it is impossible coherently to advocate toleration of universal scope, and in this respect toleration is unlike proselytism, since the latter can coherently be advocated as an attitude of universal scope.

Toleration is like proselytism in being a concept of the moral order. Both imply the same judgment about the alien: that the alien's beliefs are false, and/or that the alien's practices are improper. But where the proselytizer wants to transform the alien into kin by making a proselyte of him, the practitioner of tolerance wants to let him alone in his error, to permit him to continue to do or think what he does or thinks.

"Toleration" generally denotes a good for early twenty-first-century speakers of American English. To say of someone that he's tolerant is to praise him; to say of him that he's intolerant is, generally, to attribute to him a moral fault of a deep and significant kind. "Proselytism" is no longer a lively word in current spoken English, but if it were there can be little doubt that it would have a negative connotation, and one that would be given to it in large part because it would seem that to advocate proselytism is precisely to be intolerant, to reject toleration. Proselytism and toleration have come to be approximate antonyms for us. This negative judgment about proselytism is evident, too, in our legal discourse, where proselytism still is a lively term. When the legislature or the judiciary is called upon to decide which activities cannot be supported by public funds, those that include proselytism are high on the list, usually because it is thought that supporting (religious) proselytism would offend against the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Activities that advocate or promote toleration, by contrast, are proper candidates for public funding.

There are historical reasons for the negative connotations borne by proselytism and the positive ones borne by toleration. Chief among them is the understanding of the European conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that had come to be widely held by European and American intellectuals in the eighteenth century. These conflicts were understood to have been caused in large part by an intransigence about particular religious commitments and a concomitant deeply rooted desire to make proselytes out of those with different particular religious commitments. It was such an understanding that in part motivated Locke to write in defense of religious toleration as the answer to such difficulties toward the end of the seventeenth century; such an understanding was present to the minds of many of the framers of the U.S. Constitution a century later, and it undoubtedly played its part in Jefferson's advocacy of a wall of separation between church and state and in Madison's objections to such things as the appointment of a chaplain to Congress. Religious toleration was seen as the principal answer to religious strife, the bringer of peace where there had been endless war; and proselytism was seen as one among—perhaps the chief among—the causes of religious violence. This is still the grammar of the thought of most Americans about toleration as opposed to proselytism.

Essential to the long-term rhetorical success of the project of religious toleration was its self-presentation as a view elevated above and related identically to all particular religious commitments and their accompanying proselytisms. This was important because if religious toleration appeared to favor some particular religious proselytisms over others, or, worse, appeared itself to be a form of religious proselytism, its professed goal of undergirding a political order in which rival religious proselytisms would no longer be destructive would be made more difficult to achieve. And on the whole, the presentation of toleration as a position above the fray of religious conflict has been successful, at least rhetorically. The form this rhetoric took in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been widely imitated, and the idea that the law should occupy a position neutral to all particular religious proselytisms is there especially clear, rhetorically speaking.

But this attempt to occupy a moral and cognitive high ground above the play of conflicting religious proselytisms fails conceptually. On closer examination, toleration reveals itself as just another proselytism, and the decision for or against it is therefore not different in kind from the decision for or against any other particular proselytism, religious or otherwise. The grammar and syntax of toleration propose as destination a place that cannot be arrived at, that no-place from which all particular religious proselytisms can be tolerated (endured, put up with, let be). The rhetorical advantage still enjoyed by advocates of toleration over advocates of particular proselytisms turns out, upon examination, to be without conceptual support.

The most obvious difficulty is that the grammar of toleration itself shows that it is not possible to maintain an evenhanded attitude of letting-be to every particular proselytism. Recall that it is intrinsic to that grammar that the alien should be permitted to continue in his error; this requires that he seem to the tolerationist precisely to be in error.

To illustrate the chief difficulty with advocacy of universal toleration, suppose that two clashing proselytisms are in the field. One wants to make proselytes for

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the community of those who think that a public education may not require religious believers to read any works that call into question in a radical way the teachings of their own religion. The other wants to make proselytes for the community of those who think that a public education may require religious believers to read just such works. (I draw upon *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* [1987], a classic and much-discussed Sixth Circuit Court decision for this example.) These are incompatible positions, based as they are upon strictly contradictory claims about what a public education may require. Short, then, of some deep psychological problems, active membership in both communities is impossible.

Can both proselytisms be tolerated? They cannot. It is not possible for the advocate of toleration coherently to maintain the judgment of error with respect to both proselytisms, for the judgments implied by the two are contradictory, and one cannot judge that two contradictories are identically erroneous. And since the judgment of error is intrinsic to the grammar of toleration, it is not possible to be tolerant of both.

It is possible (though difficult and unlikely) to act identically toward both: to refuse engagement with both, perhaps, and so to preserve this aspect of toleration for each. But even this limited toleration will not be possible for any community that has to decide which proselytism will be permitted to continue to have a voice, since not only are the claims made by each contradictory, but the courses of action proposed by each cannot be actualized. And in the *Mozert* case itself, the U.S. judicial system decided directly and unambiguously for the second view—that a public education may require religious believers under its care to read works that call into question in a radical way the teachings of their religion. In so deciding, of course, the U.S. judicial system became itself a particular proselytism, in this case for the so-called tolerant position that a child may be required by the state to read (though not to endorse) a radically critical alien work.

It is, then, not possible for the tolerationist coherently to commend toleration for every particular proselytism. Advocates of toleration will inevitably, like it or not, become proselytizers for (and against) some particular proselytisms. The reasons that make it virtually impossible for anyone with a social existence consistently and completely to avoid proselytism are just the same reasons that make it virtually impossible for anyone consistently and completely to be identically tolerant toward all particular proselytisms.

Toleration's own grammar thus reveals it as a species or kind of proselytism. It is one more player in the field, one more competing proselytism among many. Toleration, we might say, is the proselytism that dare not speak its name.

The reverse, however, is not true. While the grammar of toleration makes of it a species of proselytism, the grammar of proselytism does not make of it a species of toleration. One can consistently be an advocate of a proselytism of universal scope—one can, that is to say, coherently want evenhandedly to make proselytes of all aliens, while one cannot coherently want evenhandedly to tolerate all aliens. This is at least a tactical disadvantage for advocates of toleration. It means that the rhetorical advantage gained by an attempt to occupy the cognitive high ground must be relinquished, and the particular proselytism that is toleration argued for on its merits, without sleight of hand.

If the Sixth Circuit in *Mozert* had taken the line I recommend, it would not have rejected the plaintiff's claim that her religious freedom was being infringed by being made to read works in radical opposition to the teachings of her religion. The claim that her religious freedom was left intact by asking her only to read and not to agree with such works disingenuously (or blindly) attempts to occupy a high ground that isn't there. It carries the implication that being asked to read something in radical opposition to what you believe can't by itself conflict with what you believe. But of course it can conflict if among the things you believe is that *I shouldn't read things that radically question what I believe.* The court should have simply acknowledged that the plaintiff's free exercise was indeed being infringed, and that this was the result of a substantive and particular understanding of what good education is, an understanding held and proselytized on behalf of by the school board. Such a ruling would have acknowledged that American public education, shot through though it is with the rhetoric of toleration, is in fact a set of particular proselytisms, as it must be. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of all the practices of American public life, from the legislative acts of Congress to the judicial rulings of the Supreme Court to the regulations and syllabus decisions of the lowliest school board.

If this is correct, the grammar and syntax of proselytism are conceptually superior to those of toleration. This is principally because advocacy of toleration is itself a particular proselytism. It would be good for American public life if this were openly acknowledged. Among the causes of our present difficulties, both at home and abroad, is a deep sense (usually inchoate but not the less deep for that) on the part of religious people that the rhetoric of toleration is being deployed in a duplicitous and underhanded way to bring about legislative and social goals that are every bit as particular and every bit as contestable as those commended by any religion while simultaneously obscuring these facts.

It would also be good, I suspect, for America's place in the world—where deep commitments to particular

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religious proselytisms are increasingly a public force—if those who speak publicly for the country were clearly to acknowledge the following. First, that the U.S. in its foreign policy does in fact act as an agency proselytizing for a particular understanding of what constitutes human flourishing, and for a particular understanding of the institutional forms that will foster such flourishing. Second, that the U.S. has in the past, is now, and likely will again use force or the threat of force to make proselytes, willing or unwilling, for the community of those who live under the arrangements it prefers. Third, that what the U.S. proselytizes for in these areas is no less particular and no less disputable than what, to take an important contemporary example in this time of trouble, conservative Wahhabi Muslims proselytize for. The decision for the former over the latter cannot be justified by using the rhetoric of toleration. If you prefer one over the other it will be because you judge the claims and practices of the one to be true and those of the other to be false. Anyone who thinks such judgments easy to make or easy to justify has failed to give them serious thought.

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Part II:
Jean Bethke Elshtain

The standard version of the story goes something like this: mandated liberal toleration saved religion from its own excesses and absolutist demands. By forcing a regime of toleration on religion, liberalism in its constitutional forms demanded that religion act more tolerantly. And so it came to pass that both "sectarian" groups (meaning religion, of course) and nonsectarian groups (all others organized along the lines of the liberal mandate) would learn to live happily or, if not that, at least peacefully with and among one another. This truce is insistently represented as a fragile one by contemporary civil libertarians and militant secularists. If religion threatens to get out of hand, it must be beaten back. Often the Spanish Inquisition is trotted out in argument as if this were a serious historic possibility in twenty-first-century American society; as if, somehow, a resurgence in religious intolerance were the greatest danger we faced.

This is the regnant story. Of course, there are other ways to tell the tale. One would be to take note of the fact that were one to do something as unseemly as a body count of victims, the antireligious ideologies of the twentieth century would win that contest hands down. Murderous intolerance leading to a quest to silence or, worse, to eliminate those who challenge one's own views is no exclusive purview of those with religious convictions. To this would be added details of the many ways that the regime of liberal tolerance has imposed real hardships on the free exercise of religion, operating, as it does, under the suspicion that intolerant religion is always something to be feared. One way or the other, this rebuttal would hold, religion per se is not the problem.

There was a worm in the apple from the very beginning of the move for toleration. If one traces that beginning from John Locke's classic *Letter on Toleration* one discovers that in order for religion to be tolerated it must be privatized. There is a realm of private soulcraft, a realm of public statecraft, and never the twain shall meet. In the religious domain, one answers God's call. In the civic realm, God doesn't figure directly anymore. One's fidelity is pledged to the magistrate. Should the magistracy egregiously overstep its bounds, there is always the "appeal to heaven" and the possibility of revolution. All religions—save atheism and Roman Catholicism—are to be tolerated. Constitutional scholar Michael McConnell observes: "Locke's exclusion of atheists and Catholics from toleration cannot be dismissed as a quaint exception to his beneficent liberalism; it follows logically from the ground on which his argument for toleration rested. If religious freedom meant nothing more than that religion should be free so long as it is irrelevant to the state, it does not mean very much." How so? Because religion has been privatized and its meaning reduced to the subjective spiritual well-being of religious practitioners.

This privatization, even subjectifying, of religion feeds into the bad odor surrounding any hint of proselytization. Proselytizing seemed at best bad manners; at worst, a way to try to force something on me that I do not want, am not interested in, but may be gulled or intimidated into accepting. The general animus against proselytizing flows from a conviction that those driven in that direction will, almost invariably, be persons of strong religious conviction: those, therefore, who, should they become dominant, would move to end the very toleration that has made their open proselytizing possible. So, in the name of preserving a regime of toleration, we must not tolerate unrestrained proselytization.

A whiff of this intolerance for proselytizing comes through in the comments of one of Alan Wolfe's respondents in his book *One Nation, After All.* One "Jody Fields" is quoted as saying: "If you are a Hindu and you grew up being a Hindu, keep it to yourself. Don't impose your

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religion, and don't make me feel bad because I do this and you do this." Embedded in this comment is an intolerance of public expression of religious pluralism. Telling a Hindu to hide being Hindu is scarcely a picture of liberal pluralism; or so, at least, one would think. One way or the other, the continuing privatizing of religion means that when religion shows its face it must not take the form of actually trying to persuade someone else of the truth of the religious beliefs being displayed. "Keep it to yourself."

As if this weren't enough to mull over, let's add a more recent trend to the mix. I have in mind the attack on the very notion of tolerance and toleration emanating from a postmodern direction, from those most tied up in identity politics. The argument goes roughly like this: toleration was always a sham, a way to enforce a particular Eurocentric, patriarchal, heterosexist, Christian worldview. It was a cover for hegemony. (And, of course, there is always just enough truth to be found in such blanket charges that one cannot simply dismiss them out of hand.)

What atheists, or pagans, or non-Western religious devotees, those with once hidden sexual orientations, those who are "third world," or nonwhite, seek is not toleration but equal acceptance. This equal acceptance will be attained only when the society—any society—refuses to make any normative distinctions between and among any and all comprehensive understandings of what makes a life good or worthy, or a belief true, or a way of structuring families better than some other, and so forth. Laws, public policies, the cultural ethos must all practice total nondiscrimination, in the sense of refraining from making any normative distinctions among modes of belief and ways of life. Sexual sadomasochism between consenting adults is not to be construed as a problematic way of ordering a human existence. Those pressing the anti-toleration argument see toleration as negative, a grudging thing. They want "validation" and approval. (Even, of course, as they want to claim the radical and dangerous nature of what it is they are saying or doing, as if one could have full social validation and yet remain a permanent voice of radical dissent—but that is another issue.)

Those who defend toleration point out that the alternative to it historically has not been a happy pluralism where we are all equally delectable peas in the pod but, instead, very unhappy, unpluralistic orders in which religious minorities and dissenters were exiled or tortured or forced to conform; in which political dissenters often faced similar assaults; in which any inkling of a sexual orientation other than that which is considered normal is grounds for imprisonment or worse, and so on. The defenders of toleration would argue that it is foolish to the point of suicidal for those who are a minority—in any sense—to undermine support for toleration. Toleration is their best bet, since the world of indistinguishable "differences" is a chimera. There never has been such a world and never will be.

This, of course, still leaves open the matter of just how tolerant of pluralism the defenders of toleration are. There are, after all, among some of our legal thinkers, theoretical arguments that favor increased government regulation of "sectarian" bodies in order to make them conform to standard liberal modes of representation and legitimation in internal ordering on the view that all associations in a constitutional order must sprout analogous forms of administration. Authentic tolerance based on a recognition of deep, not superficial, differences here gives way before an attempt to "normalize." In this scenario, Catholic hospitals are forced to perform abortions on pain of punitive measures, or Catholic and Orthodox communities are required to ordain women.

The position noted above that sees toleration as just a puny thing, best exposed as bogus and done away with, construes any attempt to proselytize in negative terms because this is, by definition, an assault on someone else's identity. The issue of toleration and the complexities of proselytization have been heavily psychologized in our time. Whatever makes somebody else uncomfortable is to be eschewed. But, of course, any strong articulation of a powerful religion or a powerful political position is going to make somebody uncomfortable. Does this mean we are all reduced to bleating at one another across a vast distance, but that any attempt to persuade is cast as bad proselytizing?

Let's unpack this issue a bit. Somewhere along the line—certainly in the last thirty years or so—a view of power took hold that disdains distinctions between coercion, manipulation, and persuasion. If I change my mind about something after an encounter with you, or after having spent some time in your religious community, the presupposition is that I have been messed with: gulled or brain-washed or taken for the proverbial walk down the primrose path. It is an odd business, power, because when we say, as many do these days, that every encounter involves power, we make it harder to distinguish between instances of real intimidation and instances of authentic persuasion. In instances of intimidation there is an implied threat of harm unless you convert to my point of view. In instances of manipulation, I sneakily get you on my side. Neither of these views respects you as a moral agent who can freely weigh alternatives and make up his or her own mind.

Persuasion, by contrast, begins with the presupposition that you are a moral agent, a being whose dignity no one is permitted to deny or to strip from you, and, from that stance of mutual respect, one offers argu-

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ments, or invites your participation, your sharing, in a community and its rhythms and rituals. You do not lose something by agreeing. One never simply jettisons what one used to believe. But one may reject it. (And those are not identical.) Even among persons religious, however, proselytizing has come to have an unpleasant ring to it. Evangelizing sounds better. The picture of the proselytizer is of some latter-day Savonarola, severe and intimidating, or an Elmer Gantry-type huckster.

The upshot of all this would seem to be that both toleration and proselytizing are badly battered as concepts and as practices. Is there any way to redeem one, or the other, or both? I think there is. My example of redeeming both toleration and proselytization comes from Pope John Paul II's recent pastoral visit to Kazakhstan. In his greeting, the Pope said, "Allow me to profess before you with humility and pride the faith of Christians: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God made man two thousand years ago, came to reveal to us this truth through his person and his teaching. Only in the encounter with him, the Word made flesh, do we find the fullness of self-realization and happiness. Religion itself, without the experience of the wonderful discovery of the Son of God and communion with him who became our brother, becomes a mere set of principles which are increasingly difficult to understand, and rules which are increasingly hard to accept."

This statement is moving and it's worth exploring why. Certainly the combination of pride and humility is a part of it. One places before another, in all humility, one's most profound beliefs, beliefs one holds with pride—not boastful self-pride but with dignity—knowing that these beliefs may well be repudiated or ignored. Also powerful is John Paul's recognition that turning God into a metaphysical first principle is not only "increasingly difficult to understand" but "increasingly hard to accept." Here there is a fascinating dimension to his words to Kazakh young people, for he is also proselytizing those who are already Christians, reminding them of what their professions are all about.

During this remarkable pastoral visit, John Paul also offered an eloquent defense of toleration: "When in a society citizens accept one another [notice that what is being accepted is one another as citizens, in one's civic status] in their respective religious beliefs, it is easier to foster among them the effective recognition of other human rights and an understanding of the values on which a peaceful and productive coexistence is based. In fact, they feel a common bond in the awareness that they are brothers and sisters because they are children of the one God." This is a reference to toleration among religious believers. Unbelievers, presumably, have their own resources to draw upon to respect human rights, but the pontiff suggests that the bond of coexistence will have a different significance between believers and unbelievers than between believers and believers. He reminded his listeners that in Kazakhstan today there are "citizens belonging to over one hundred nationalities and ethnic groups" and they live—they have no choice but to live—side by side. Coexistence is a necessity. Building "bridges of solidarity and cooperation with other peoples, nations, and cultures" is an immanent possibility that should be realized even as the gospel in all its fullness is preached "with humility and pride."

This isn't overly idealistic. It is, rather, a filling out of what a commitment to authentic toleration entails. Toleration rightly understood permits more robust ties of civic sisterhood and brotherhood to grow and to flourish, perhaps between religious believers whose comprehensive understandings differ but whose anthropologies overlap. Toleration also permits more distance, if, for example, I simply cannot affirm your life choices and comprehensive views. I need not validate them at all. In fact, I may actively loathe them and argue against them. But, unless you threaten the civic order in a central way, I am not permitted to deny you your "free exercise."

What it means to threaten the civic order in a central way is a topic for another time, but it derives from Justice Robert Jackson's rueful recognition that the Constitution is not a suicide pact. What is one to do with groups that use freedoms, claim tolerance, then set out to proselytize for a future order that would destroy all religious tolerance, abolish constitutional protections, and establish a theocracy or a militant official atheism? Minimally, we must remind ourselves that we are under no obligation, as people who support constitutional guarantees of tolerance, to respect beliefs that deny the dignity of persons, preach hatred, and directly threaten individuals or the country as a whole. Tolerance here bumps up against a limit. That might make us uncomfortable, but there are worse things than discomfort. Like, for instance, the end of the regime of tolerance itself.

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Dakota Thanksgiving

J. Bottum

Thanksgiving was always tense while I was growing up, and I don't know why. Christmas, now—Christmas was mostly fun and presents and carols and laughter, as I remember. But Thanksgiving was arguments and huffs and recriminations and doors slamming and one indistinguishable great-uncle or another rousing himself from his after-dinner torpor to growl, "Now, now," from an easy chair, puffing through his mustache like an irritated walrus as he loosened his belt another notch. Thanksgiving was my sisters crying, and my aunt rising like Athena in righteousness at the dining-room table to shout, "You wretched insect," and my father slipping off to the kitchen to sit at the counter and hold his head, muttering, "Every year. Every goddamn year."

The rise of college football on television helped a little; at least it gave the younger men something to quarrel about besides the family. But even that wasn't enough. One of my mother's cousins had a way of asking, "Why can't we all be united on this special day?" with a sort of simultaneously superior and plaintive sniff that, oddly enough, usually did manage to unite the family. Unfortunately, it united them only in shouting at her until they had driven her from the table in tears, her damp napkin fluttering down like a flag of surrender on her half-eaten cranberry sauce and sage stuffing.

And then—you could feel it coming the whole day, like condemned prisoners waiting for the gallows' trap to open—someone would at last bring up the infamous incident of . . . oh, I can't even remember now what it was. Something like what an uncle's wife's sister said about a cousin's daughter at an aunt's wedding. And half the family would stomp out in anger, and the other half would stay only to complain about the half that had already left, and everyone would finally agree that they were never going to speak to anyone ever again, or at least not until Christmas. God help us. Who would have a family?

The year that I was fourteen, I was filled with fury, and the cause still isn't clear. It was fury at my parents, fury at my sisters, fury when I was treated like a boy, fury when I was treated like an adult, fury at the sheer *being* of being fourteen years old. The real inwardness of that feeling is impossible to call up again—primarily, I think, because it had no content. It was a kind of pure hunger, an unsatisfiable, unending ache without focus, object, or goal. I wanted to be noticed all the time, and I wanted to be invisible, passing through the world unseen. I wanted to be cared for, and I wanted to be unencumbered with care. I wanted everything. I wanted nothing. I just wanted.

Part of it may have been actual hunger. For mothers when their sons' growth kicks in, it must be as though something unimaginably alien has moved into the house. I remember needing food all the time. As I walked in the door after school, I would tear open a plastic-wrapped tube of Fig Newtons. Before supper, I would eat wax-paper package after wax-paper package of graham crackers—buttering them, it now seems hard to believe, to make them more filling—and still down two or three helpings of the casserole or pot roast my mother put on the table an hour later. On Shrove Tuesday and perhaps once or twice a year more, she would make what we called "breakfast-dinner," an evening meal of pancakes and eggs and bacon and toast. While my sisters picked daintily at their eggs, my father would laugh and cheer me on as I raced through stacks of pancakes, alternating jam and sour cream with maple syrup and butter.

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There was an extravagance to eating and drinking that can't be recreated at any other point in life. I remember the rain splashing against the windows while I sat at the speckled linoleum of the kitchen table on a Saturday afternoon to eat an entire loaf of sandwich bread, a bag of apples, and a jar of peanut butter, filling the pages of *The Count of Monte Cristo* with bread and apple crumbs and peanut-buttered thumbprints. I remember swallowing gulp after gulp of water from the silver arc of the garden hose after mowing the lawn in the heat of a summer evening—and then, my belly distended so far I could barely move, falling back on the new-cut grass to watch the angry gnats swirl up against the orange sunset.

But that feeling of being fourteen was something more than just appetite. The lintels of the door frames all through the house were marked with hand prints as I reached up to touch them every time I passed beneath, amazed at my new height. I had spent the summer hauling hay—the hardest job I've ever had—and I was proud of my new strength. My parents believed in work for their children, and by the time I left home for good I'd delivered papers early in the morning, and scooped ice cream after school, and followed a harvest team through the wheat fields, and spent a summer with a finish crew, tacking the wooden trim on kitchens through an endless subdivision of identical split-level houses in Ogden, Utah.

Whenever one job ended, there was always some new client of my father's law practice, anxious—my father insisted—for me to come along and help. I stood behind the taco grill, hour after hour, waiting for customers at a failing Mexican fast-food restaurant, and I hung pictures at an art gallery, briefly and badly. At a placer-wash gold mine outside Nevada City, the summer I was fifteen, I learned how to run a diesel pumping engine and mix the orange and purple glues that held together the huge sections of plastic pipe that carried water up to the mine. I learned to play pinochle at night by kerosene lantern and to sit silently all afternoon, watching for leaks in the 150-foot wooden sluice we'd built, lined with serrated steel frames on hairy mats to catch the washed-down gold that, sadly, wasn't there.

For my parents, the point wasn't the money—which was fortunate, because I managed to save none of it. I never did get paid for the summer at the gold mine. The leasing companies came in August to repossess the bulldozer and the backhoe, the sheriffs followed the next day with an eviction notice, and the mining company that was going to make us all rich dissolved in the usual muddle of liens and bankruptcies, lawsuits and countersuits, that seemed to await all the would-be wheeler-dealers and Micawberish romantics of business who passed through our lives.

We had a phrase we used to describe it. The bookshelves in the living room were lined with lawyers' stories: lives of Clarence Darrow, Learned Hand, and Charles Evans Hughes; memoirs by Bellamy Partridge, Louis Nizer, and William O. Douglas. And somewhere in a biography of one of the great lawyer opponents of Tammany Hall—Samuel Seabury, maybe, or William Travers Jerome—my father came across a line he loved and quoted the rest of his life. When one of New York's periodic reform-minded grand juries subpoenaed a Tammany official and demanded to know where all the bribes and kickbacks had disappeared to, he simply shrugged his shoulders and answered with the sigh of a man who understands the way money slips away, "It is gone where the woodbine twineth."

That might have been the motto of all my father's clients: the oil-shale developers, the penny-stock promoters, the phone-solicitors who were going to put little packets of pick-me-up vitamins on the checkout counters of convenience stores across America, the inventor of a static-electric space heater, the man who thought a Brazilian soft drink called Guarana was going to sweep the country—and somehow convinced Canada Dry to bottle the stuff and give him the doomed distributorship for the entire Midwest.

Unfortunately, that might have been my motto, as well. Even the jobs for which I actually got paid never added up to anything, and the money always seemed to go where the woodbine twineth. Some of it slipped away in buying books—and more books, a few phonograph albums, and yet more books. Why would anyone use the Carnegie Library down by the courthouse when it was possible to *own* the book: hold it, feel the possession of it while you were reading, then set it as a marker of permanent knowledge on the shelves beside all the other books?

But more of the money seemed to disappear simply in living. I had friends who looked up from a summer's work with thousands of dollars in the bank, but I could never learn the knack—or understand, really, why the money wasn't in their pockets to be frittered away.

Once, while I was visiting home from college, my father sent me off for a week to Portland with an enormous, laughing, wild-living man from Denver named Edward Kingman: a former football player, a promoter of impossible schemes, a teller of stories, a buyer of drinks, a thief if the occasion offered, and the best-dressed man I ever knew. We were supposed to close down the space-heater company before the vultures picked it apart: get an inventory, cancel the outstanding orders, change the locks, and pack up the hopelessly confused paperwork for the accountants to look at. Quite how an eighteen-year-old philosophy student was going to protect anyone's interests isn't clear to me even now. The idea may simply have been that Edward King-

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man was there to see that the company's officers didn't loot the place down to the carpets, and I was there to see that he didn't join in.

But mostly what I remember is the style of the man I traveled with. He seemed to act as though the most important reason for the trip was the opportunity to taste again a brand of pickle sold only in Portland, and he carried me from bar to bar, insisting that I'd be grateful the rest of my life for understanding the differences among piano bars and hotel bars and neighborhood bars and nightclubs. The first morning we were there, he walked in to find me trying to figure out how to use the coffee-maker that slid out of a cupboard in the hotel room. Stopping me—and insisting I put on a jacket and tie—he took me downstairs to the linen-covered tables of the dining room, where, once the china cups and silver coffee-service had come, he explained the code of men like himself. Gentlemen, he said (and it was the first time I had ever heard the word used in any but a mocking way), gentlemen—ladies, for that matter, all people who want to live well—never cook for themselves. When they have money, they eat in restaurants. When they are broke, they go hungry. It was his great boast that, whatever else he had done in his life to survive, he had never tried to economize even to the extent of boiling water for himself.

I liked cooking too much to agree, but the *stance* of it—the Renaissance-courtier quality of the scruple, the antiquated arrogance, the marking of a point of honor, the proud claiming of an absolute adherence to a style of living—seemed to me at the time an ideal of adulthood: money comes easily, and money disappears easily, and the main thing is never to betray the least concern for it.

That was probably not the lesson my parents had in mind when they sent their children off to work. The three of us remain to this day perpetually tardy night-owls. My little sister has never arrived at anything in her life within an hour of its scheduled beginning, my older sister isn't entirely convinced the sun comes up before noon, and, compared to me, they are both bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Faced with children like this, our mother and father no doubt hoped work would teach us early rising—and steadiness and thrift and application and all the rest of the conscientious, Ben Franklinish virtues that remained common coin in South Dakota long after the rest of America became too self-conscious to hold them openly. "When you wake up, get up; when you get up, do something," my father would intone in the carefully righteous voice of a man handing on to his children the ancient wisdom of his forebears.

In fact, we were bombarded with lots of such things while I was growing up, daily doses of the kind of apothegm and adage Ben Franklin set in *Poor Richard's Almanac*: "A penny saved is a penny earned," "Plow deep while sluggards sleep," "Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today." But they had lost, somehow, their reality and purpose—and you can trace, in that loss, the history of a certain swath of America. My great-grandparents, all eight of them original settlers in South Dakota, actually lived their lives by Franklin's maxims. Their children, my grandparents, merely believed them. And by the time those stern aphorisms reached my parents' generation, they had become something not far removed from knocking on wood to avert the evil eye or curving out to keep from walking under a ladder: the things people do or say with that apologetic shrug which means they know they shouldn't still half-believe in such superstitious old-fashionedness.

The long decades of attack on the virtues of the middle class had taken their toll. From Stendhal's declaration that the shopkeepers and successful farmers of the bourgeoisie made him want to "weep and vomit at the same time" to Karl Marx's identification of the middle class as the cause of all evil—from the beatnik poetry of the 1950s to the pop music of the 1970s, for that matter—everything in Western civilization conspired against the merchants and farmers and lawyers who filled the middle class.

Even in Pierre, South Dakota, about as far from the European centers of avant-garde civilization as one can get, it made the people we knew uneasy and awkward in their skins—and they could not plead success as the justification for their lives, for South Dakota had seen far too much failure. Those hard prairies and badlands were the graveyard of the immigrant's dream. The state reached its peak of population not in the 1980s but in the 1880s, when homesteading called in over two million settlers. Twelve years later—after the blizzards, the droughts, the floods, and the locust plagues, after the normal summers of broiling heat and winters of endless cold—there were only a few hundred thousand of them left. The banks and the feed stores in the county seats were boarded up. The farmers abandoned their hopeless plowing. The ranchers gave up when they saw their cattle freezing at Christmas and dying of thirst on the Fourth of July. The deserted wooden churches lasted for a few more years, turning gray in the relentless wind, before they fell in upon themselves and disappeared. "The great plain drinks the blood of Christian men and is satisfied," Ole Rolvaag wrote in *Giants in the Earth*, his classic novel of life on the Dakota prairie, as he watched his fellow Norwegian settlers struggle and pray and struggle again, until they too at last succumbed.

The ones who survived were luckier and better placed, nearer the rivers but off the flood plains, closer to the markets at the railheads, sheltered by the hills from some of the worst of the winters. They were hard-

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er, too: stern, unyielding people who did not fail because they refused to. But their descendants grew less stern and more yielding generation by generation—a weaker, more diffident people: uncertain of the virtues they ought to pursue and unsure of how to pursue them.

And yet, it would be wrong to say that my own parents had lost—at least for their children—their entire share in the old-fashioned American vision of the complete citizen. What they still held, deeply and truly, was the other side of the Ben Franklin ideal: the eighteenth-century model of a world in which Franklin could be a printer and an inventor and a statesman and a philosopher and a builder and a scientist and a diplomat. My father and mother still believed in *omnicompetence*, the capacity for everything, the ability to turn one's hand to anything,

Not, you understand, that they themselves ever quite managed the omnicompetence they preached, or that we children ever lived up to their expectations. But the ideal ruled our childhoods, and it was the most impractical practicality anyone ever conceived. I have a photograph of the three of us posed against the railing of the ferry crossing Lake Michigan on our way to Boston for a family vacation one year while my father attended a legal seminar at Harvard. I suppose I must have been eleven, which would have made my older sister twelve and my younger sister six. And that knock-kneed boy and those two thin, awkward girls were supposed to be able to parse a poem and ride a horse, cook a dinner and use a drill, pick out a melody on the piano and clean the points on the carburetor.

Exactly why did my father want us to know how to rewire the toaster? Or at least, since that's not necessarily a bad thing to know, why did he insist we be able to rewire the toaster *and* recite all 108 lines of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"?

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December (First make sure the toaster is unplugged) *and each separate dying ember* (Now take a Phillip's-head screwdriver) *wrought its ghost upon the floor* (I said a Phillip's-head. A Phillip's-head. The one with the pointy cross on the end). *Eagerly I wished the morrow* (Finally. Now turn the toaster over and look for the screws on the bottom), *vainly I had sought to borrow* (Um, yes, I did forget about the crumbs falling out all over the kitchen floor) *from my books surcease of sorrow* (No, your mother is not going to be mad), *sorrow for the lost Lenore* (Yes, I'm sure). *For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore* (That's all right. It's supposed to spring out like that), *nameless here for evermore* (See? That's where the insulation has worn through). *And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain* (Yes, that's why the fuse has blown every morning for the last three days. No, you can't plug it back in and watch it spark) *thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before.*

The poor workers who passed through the house to repair things—or re-repair the things we had mangled trying to fix them ourselves—were turned into adjunct professors at my parents' Academy for Teaching Children Everything. I don't know why, it may have been the wide-eyed look of innocence my mother reserved for strangers from whom she wanted something, but most of them were charmed by the demand that they explain each step of their work to three rail-thin and skeptical children. I remember sitting with my little sister fully clothed in the dry bathtub, resting our chins on the porcelain edge, while a tongue-tied plumber, sweating in nervousness, tried simultaneously to wrestle a new toilet into place and to explain what the wax ring at the joint was for. The dry-cleaner, the milkman, and the cement-truck driver were expected to have the history of their professions at their fingertips. The Culligan Man, wheeling in his water-softening tank, gave us an amazingly good explanation of acids, alkalis, pH levels, and the buffering of salt solutions. Even the lady collecting for UNICEF had to deliver a potted lecture on the goals of the United Nations before we were allowed to drop our pennies in her orange box.

Of course, it didn't always work out. My mother couldn't understand why the roofers wanted more money, not less, for letting me climb up with them to learn about roofs by helping nail on a new layer of cedar shingles. After fifteen minutes—during which I dropped his tuning key down behind the sounding board and my little sister, showing off, played a chord while his head was inside the works—the piano tuner threatened to beat us with a wooden mallet if we didn't go away.

Meanwhile, we had "Learning About the Great Composers" phonograph records and "Build Your Own Shortwave Radio" sets and Chilton car-repair manuals and booklets called "Teach Yourself the Guitar in Twelve Easy Lessons." We had reel-to-reel tapes of Dylan Thomas reciting his poetry (so we could lilt, in a Welsh accent, "Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs"), Senator Everett Dirksen delivering great speeches from American history (so we could declaim, in an Illinois accent, William Jennings Bryan's "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold"), and Vincent Price overacting his way through Shakespeare (so we could recite, in an accent like nothing in this world, Richard III's "Since I cannot prove a lover, to entertain these fair well-spoken days, I am determined to prove a villain").

The year that I was ten, my mother decided she would finally finish her master's degree in dramatics, and it

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never occurred to her not to take her children with her for a summer at the Black Hills Playhouse—for what better chance could there be for us to see how to put on a play? We learned stage carpentry from the set-builders and silk-screening from the promotion department. We danced and sneered as the wicked children in a production of *Carousel*, swelled the crowd in *The Legend of Devil's Gulch*, and annoyed the workshop actors all summer by reciting along with them their lines in rehearsals for Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*—a play which passed, in the Black Hills of South Dakota, as the latest of the avant garde. "Hell is other people," my five-year-old sister would snarl from her sleeping bag when we tried to get her up in the morning. She was much better at the line than the actual cast.

A childhood like this was fun, of course, and aggravating beyond belief. By the time my older sister followed our mother's footsteps and went back east to school at Smith College, she was expected to be able to play the violin, run the monstrous floor-polishing machine over the cork my parents had insanely used to tile the kitchen floor, give an impromptu oration on prison reform, sit across from a bridge player as demanding as my grandmother, and do her own carpentry. Lord knows what her fellow Smithies made of it.

One August, while I was in college at Georgetown, she came down on the train to Washington to visit. I remember, for that was the summer I caught pneumonia while setting up cocktail parties for a catering company in the evenings, working on a clean-up crew for a construction company in the mornings, and sleeping through my junior tutorial on the Greek sources of the Gospel of John in the afternoons. And as we sat on the brick steps of the rowhouse on Observatory Place where I lived with four other students, talking and drinking gin while the humid Washington evening sweated around us, she told me that she had finally decided not to go on to graduate school in French literature but to enroll in law school, because the only thing she really wanted in life was to be *rich*—so rich that she could hire people to do things for her and never again have to bother with learning how to do them herself.

We laughed and laughed, so hard I dropped my drink, and then we laughed at that, for we had reached the stage of both reminiscence and drinking where everything seems impossibly funny. But what she was remembering was the less-pleasant side of my parents' desire for omnicompetent children. The truth is, learning to do a little bit of everything, we never learned to do anything particularly well. The attempt to be all things is actually a recipe to be nothing. And there always loomed over us an unfulfillable demand that we would, somehow, already know how to do each new thing—and when he was too tired or irritated to catch himself, the demand would smash out in frustration from my father. I remember my little sister crying on her first skiing trip, because she was afraid to tell him she didn't know how to ski. I remember his taking me trapshooting when I was eight—and stalking out to snatch his shotgun back in disgust when I missed ten shots in a row. I remember his barking, "Why are you so *incompetent*?" when my older sister brought him the wrong hammer. It was the worse insult we could imagine, and she sobbed and sobbed alone in her room until my mother sent him to apologize.

Those horrible, apprehensive moments were rare, but we would do anything to avoid them, and what we learned to do was to fake it: fake understanding blank verse, fake knowing how to feed the hogs when we went to the farm, fake being able to reassemble the clutch on the pickup truck. It was a kind of constant pretense of knowledge in the face of the unknown, and my mother and father intended it to be born in us from self-confidence. But to their disappointment, we were anxious children, and its real root was a fear of being discovered not to know, a fear of being found out false.

It's only now, while I bring up my own daughter, that I realize how cleverly my parents had tried to escape the trap in which they found themselves. They had been sent back to the East Coast for school to become educated members of the middle class at a time in which East Coast education had set itself to the undoing of the middle class. They were cultured people at a time in which culture had turned against people like themselves. They were old-fashioned South Dakotans trying—with the best will in the world, a real desire for accommodation—to remake themselves in a new-fashioned country.

And their solution was not to abandon the Ben Franklinism in which they had grown up, but to invert it: a model of middle-class virtues transformed into a model of nobility. Poor Richard's "Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today" became "Never leave anything untried." The demand for hard work, which for Franklin was an adjunct of thrift, became for my parents a tool of experience. Their vision was intermittent, for I think they never brought the idea of a Franklinesque aristocracy to full consciousness. But they wanted something new for themselves and their children, some escape from the unbearable tension the culture had brought against the world they inherited from their own parents. And what they came up with was, in its way, brilliant and lively and filled with adventure.

It was also doomed—as I learned when I went off to work and discovered that having once had someone explain to me how an arc welder works isn't the same as actually knowing how to weld. I sometimes wonder whether even Ben Franklin succeeded at being Ben

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Franklin, and he had the advantage of living in the eighteenth century, when skill at everything still looked possible. In the more than two hundred years since, the widening of knowledge made narrowness a necessity. It isn't actually reassuring to learn that the brain surgeon who's about to operate on you is also a good computer programmer, or the pilot who's about to fly you to Honolulu has written a monograph on the mating habits of cuttlefish and other carnivorous cephalopods. Our car mechanic is an amateur literary scholar, and every time I see him he wants to argue the case for the Earl of Oxford's authorship of Shakespeare's sonnets—but, as my wife points out, that doesn't really compensate for her fainting when she opens his bill. (Maybe I shouldn't have said that Oxford was a lightweight fop who couldn't have written a line of Shakespeare on the best day he ever had. I'm pretty sure that's what those "incidental labor charges" were about.)

Once, when I was working for a construction company that was building a new wing on a pharmaceutical factory, the crew boss asked me if I knew how to hang a door. I'd been working all summer, and I felt competent—as though confidence and a general ability to figure things out would carry me through most anything. Besides, I'd taken wooden doors off their hinges at home, planing them down to make them fit after they'd warped, and none of it seemed too hard.

But what he pointed me to wasn't like the finished jambs and sills at home. It was a raw hole in a half-finished wall. And there beside it on the floor was a massive metal frame and a steel door so heavy I could barely lift it, much less maneuver it onto its hinges or use it (as I originally planned) as a giant pattern with which to square the frame before I attached it. He let me work on that door for hours, never saying a word, until finally, by chance, I got the frame straight enough to fit and wiggled the door onto its hinges. That's when he walked over and said—more to the door than to me, swinging it gently back and forth—"Don't ever say you know how to do something when you don't."

I must have been sixteen that summer, and the shame of his soft rebuke seemed overwhelming. I took such things hard, because . . . oh, because I was sixteen and I was filled with a hunger to be something complete, to have the kind of natural authority that crew boss had: the weight of it, the gravity of a man who actually knows. I didn't really want to understand how to hang a door. I wanted to understand the mystic secret of grown-ups. I wanted to be initiated in the gnostic mysteries of adulthood. I wanted to grasp the trick of it—and the people who awakened that desire were invariably cast as surrogate parents.

It's a wonder they didn't run away screaming. Who wants his job to entail the adoption of half-grown children with aching holes in their psyches? Besides, my sisters and I already had, with our own parents, as much parenting as we could reasonably use in one lifetime. But there's something deep in the architecture of children that wants more of mothers and fathers than mothers and fathers can ever be.

Rudyard Kipling saw it, which is why his children's books spoke so deeply to us. They had the structure of true myth. Think of his stories in the first *Jungle Book* and what the orphaned Mowgli finds: the reckless father of Bagheera the Panther, the schoolmaster father of Baloo the Bear, the trickster father of Kaa the Python—together with the stability of Father Wolf, the power of Hathi the Elephant, and the authority of Akela the pack leader. Think of Kipling's novel *Kim*, for that matter, and what the parentless boy obtains with the wily horsetrader Mahbub Ali and the doddering but wise Lama and the driven Colonel Creighton and the peculiar Lurgan Sahib and the reliable Father Victor. It is the perfection of childhood, imagined in a certain light: since one father cannot play all the necessary roles of fatherhood, a child needs multiple fathers to find fulfillment.

That's the reason, I suppose, for the long years I spent doing little but hunting for extra parents to adopt me. The boss at the gold mine was a talker named Sam Sheridan, a man who could tell a joke, shape almost anything that happened to him into a story, and charm investors into putting up the cash for any number of his half-baked schemes. But mostly what I remember is his constant patter, the running commentary that poured out from him while we worked—always culminating in some claim of universal law, coined for the occasion. As we realigned the rollers on the twenty-foot perforated drum that spiraled out the rocks too big to wash down the sluice, he'd say, "The rule to remember is: when something's broken, first you bang on it a little, then you curse at it a little, and finally you go get a bigger hammer." As we reconnected the linkage for the vibrating table, he'd explain, "The lesson here is: some bailing wire, some duct tape, and there's nothing mechanical you can't patch up."

But then, too, out on the ranch, there was a rider who seemed almost never to speak at all. If I knew his name, I've forgotten it now, but I have a memory—like one of those gray-edged snapshots from the little Bakelite plastic cameras my grandparents gave us when I was eight—of sitting beside him on the bunkhouse steps one summer evening while he worked neat's-foot oil into a brittle piece of old bridle leather and watched the enormous orange sun setting over the yellow hills. I remember his browned face and dusty clothes. I remember the dark sweat stain behind the leather plait that circled his hat. I remember, as a perpetual model of adulthood, his ability to sit silent and self-possessed for

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hours, calmly rubbing the oil into the leather until the light failed. And I longed to learn how to be that man—and to be Sam Sheridan, and to be Edward Kingman, all rolled together, all at once.

Of course, even as children, my sisters and I had a pretty clear sense that we weren't actually going to succeed at being all things. I imagine that's why I was so unbearable as an adolescent. Already at fourteen I saw the thinning down of things, the fading of possibility from generation to generation, and I was furious at what seemed the unfairness of it all. My father's grandfather had come west from Wisconsin on his way to join a survey crew in the Rockies and stayed to become the federal judge for South Dakota. My mother's grandfather had ridden up on a cattle drive and stayed to be the main developer of Pierre. Along the way, he had chased outlaws on horseback, interviewed Frank James in jail and Jack Dempsey before the big fight as a free-lance journalist, become the largest land-owner in the state, and published a memoir called *Pioneer Days*. All I wanted was to do what they had done and be a little bit of everything: a scholar and a cowboy, a poet and a politician, a wheeling-dealing stock promoter and a Franciscan monk.

The combination didn't seem unreasonable to me at the time, but my mother and father were always thwarting my attempts to make it come true. Mark this thought, for it is the key to how adolescent boys view the world. The very people who were responsible for what I wanted, who put that desire in me, wouldn't let me fulfill it. Why, it was so . . . unfair. That's all it was. Unfair.

I can't remember exactly which unfairness so infuriated me the Thanksgiving I was fourteen. It may have been my parents' refusal to let me hitchhike to Rapid City over Christmas vacation. Somewhere in those days I had read Nikos Kazantzakis' *Report to Greco*—like Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, one of the great books that can be read only at a certain age—and I had become infatuated with Kazantzakis' description of the time he had gone off to the mountains to isolate himself, taking along only the Bible and Homer to read. My grandparents had a cabin up in the Black Hills where I wanted to spend Christmas by myself in the snow—and my parents wouldn't allow it, for reasons that now are obvious but then seemed raw oppression.

So I responded the way adolescents always respond: glowering, sniping away in sarcastic comments, affecting exhaustion, being unpleasant (in the way only fourteen-year-olds can be unpleasant) to my sisters, to my parents, and, that Thanksgiving, to everyone in the family. It must have been around two or three in the afternoon, while I was mocking my little sister for wanting me to play a game with her or sneering at the food my mother and grandmother were preparing. With a sudden growl, Aunt Eleanor rose from the living-room couch to glare at me for a moment over her glasses.

"Stop that at once and come with me," she commanded, picking up her coat and stalking out the door. She was the kind of person who never looked back to see whether her orders were being followed. It may have been something in her face, or the ramrod straight way she held herself, or the absolute confidence she had that no one would refuse her, but everyone obeyed Aunt Eleanor.

I found her in front, with the car running, and she took me in silence down to the river, below the dam, where the Missouri runs in open water all winter between its cold banks. The defroster blew up against the windshield, barely keeping out the cold as the car idled, and I waited and waited, hunched in protest, dreading the lecture I was sure she was about to give. But she sat there for a long while, looking out at the river, minute after minute, until at last she sighed and began:

"You know Waller Johnson, don't you? The rancher from out toward Philips. Your father has done some work for him, over the years. Lord, I remember Waller when he was young, a big, good-looking boy off the range. Your great-grandfather brought him to Pierre, found him a place to stay during the school year—partly so he could finish high school, but mostly, I think, so he could play baseball and Pierre could beat Yankton. Charlie loved baseball.

"I want to tell you a story about Waller Johnson. Back in the early 1930s, his mother and father died, the mortgage payments stopped, and the Land Bank repossessed the ranch. Waller must have been eighteen or nineteen, in those days. Somehow, he talked the Land Bank into letting him try to bring the herd to market. We gave him what help we could, but those were hard times all over, and no one thought he could do it—not with four younger brothers and sisters to feed at the same time.

"But he was a tough young man. He kept the herd together through the winter, fattened up the cattle, sold them, and reclaimed the ranch. Then he put each of his brothers and sisters through school and saw them settled, here and there. Finally Waller settled down himself, marrying a girl named Nancy Trike from, oh, I don't know—Spearfish, maybe. I remember she was a pretty thing, but thin and a little sickly.

"One winter—it must have been '42 or '43, during the war, anyway—their furnace broke down in the middle of a blizzard, and their baby began running a fever."

Aunt Eleanor watched the cold water as it murmured past, skinned with ice along the edge. "You're too young to know what it was like in those days," she said. "Most of the ranches didn't have electricity. None of them had

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plumbing. The roads were bad, and the nearest doctor was at the hospital in Pierre, maybe fifty miles away. The adults could have built a fire, cuddled up for warmth, and outlasted the storm. But the baby was sick, and he had no chance to make it through the cold. So Waller and Nancy loaded up the car with blankets and coats they'd warmed in the oven, and started off through the snow to Pierre.

"It took them three, almost four, hours to make that drive. The blizzard was pounding down from the north, swirling across the prairie, the way it does. If they missed the road or slid off into a gully, they would die—not just the baby, but all three of them, left there frozen until somebody came along and found them.

"I want you to picture this—really see it, as clearly as you can: the blinding snow, that old car creeping along the icy road, the sick child wrapped up between them, Waller and Nancy straining to see, rubbing their breath off the windows—knowing they were probably going to be killed, but knowing they had to try."

"Why didn't they stay at the ranch?" I asked, growing colder and more confused every minute we sat there in Aunt Eleanor's car by the river. "I mean, that way, at least two of them would survive. If they really thought they weren't going to make it, then they were just throwing themselves away."

"They *did* really think they weren't going to make it," she answered. "But they had to do it anyway. It wasn't a choice. It wasn't something to be calculated, weighing their lives against their baby's. They couldn't choose their own survival against a chance, however small, of his."

Aunt Eleanor turned to look at me directly, and her face was hard with something I couldn't quite understand. "And do you see why? It's because they were parents. And that's what it means to be a parent. They had already given up their lives for their child's, from the first moment he existed."

She sighed again and looked back out at the river. "In that blizzard, the bill finally came due, and they knew they had to pay it—the way you will pay it, when your time comes. The way your mother and father will pay it, when they have to. That's what I want you to remember the next time you're angry with them, the next time you want to scream because they won't let you do something, the next time you feel as though nobody understands how grown up you've become."

She glanced over at me and smiled, pulling her cloth sleeve up over her hand to wipe the windshield. "Come," she said, "it's time to get back home."

Years later, I came to see my great-aunt's story as the answer to utilitarianism and the ethics of calculation, the solution to those "lifeboat cases" we were supposed to ponder in freshman philosophy courses. But at the time I knew only that she was trying, in her way, to let me in on the secret, the mystery of adulthood. We turned away from the cold, gurgling river and drove back up the hill to the house on Elizabeth Street. Dinner was just beginning, and the arguments were already starting to swirl around the quarrelsome table. But my father winked at me across the half-carved turkey. And just as I realized how hungry I was, my mother set before me a plate filled with bright orange yams, green beans, the dark drumstick meat I loved, cranberry sauce, sage dressing—the kind of meal a fourteen-year-old boy imagines every meal should be. My parents were happy that Thanksgiving, I think, and why not? They had each other, they had their children, and they had their family, however much it squabbled and fought, gathered around them.

Nearly all that family is gone now: Aunt Eleanor, the great-uncles with their walrus mustaches, my grandfather, my father. One by one, they slipped away while I was off at school, or back east working at a young man's job in New York, or settling down with my daughter and my Brazilian wife in distant Washington, D.C. Only the river still remains unchanged, but we can never go back again to see it—not as it was the year that I was fourteen, not as it used to be. FT

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Books In Review

To Tell the Truth

Aliens in America: The Strange Truth about Our Souls. By Peter Augustine Lawler. *ISI. 350 pp. $24.95.*

***Reviewed by* Damon Linker**

Conservatives face a daunting challenge today. On the most pressing moral issues confronting the country—many of them having to do with aspects of biotechnological research—the public is deeply divided, and the divisions are far from trivial. Take the issue of embryonic stem cells. Many conservatives contend that the union of complementary gametes (sperm and ovum) instantly produces a unique person who possesses the same rights as a mature human being; they thus conclude that embryonic stem cell research, which destroys this person, must be prohibited. But many others think differently. For them, the prospect of relieving the suffering of sentient human beings—especially when they are members of one's own family or beloved celebrities such as Christopher Reeve and Michael J. Fox—should outweigh concern for the dignity of a microscopic clump of cells in a petri dish.

The former view is clearly based on the stronger argument. In the words of Robert P. George, blastocysts are indeed "capable of directing from within their own integral organic functioning and development into and through the fetal, infant, child, and adolescent stages of life, and ultimately into adulthood as, in each case, determinate, enduring, whole human beings." And yet, the latter position is not obviously absurd. It is neither nihilism nor reflexive sentimentality, but rather an intuition embedded in moral common sense, that leads so many to conclude that decency requires us to do what we can to relieve the suffering of those we love. The conflict, then, arises from a tension within morality itself.

A similar dynamic plays itself out in debates over the ongoing pharmacological revolution, which promises to eliminate psychological pain, depression, and even unhappiness itself from human life. Many conservatives are troubled by the prospect of a world in which unhappiness has been banished through the chemical manipulation of the brain. But many others find little in the idea to object to. After all, doesn't everyone believe that pain, depression, and unhappiness are evils? When they befall us, don't we try to alleviate them? When we succeed in doing so, don't we consider it a good thing? It would thus seem that the creation of a world without these afflictions would be a cause for rejoicing—perhaps even the fulfillment of a self-evident moral imperative. If conservatives hope to make headway in convincing their fellow citizens—and themselves—that this imperative should be resisted, they will have to do a better job of articulating what is really at stake in the drive to purge our lives of pain.

According to Peter Lawler, what is at stake is nothing less than our awareness of the truth about who we are. The title of Lawler's new book, *Aliens in America*, is a reference to the Christian tradition, stretching back through St. Augustine and the *Letter to Diognetus* to 1 Peter, that portrays men and women as "pilgrims or aliens in this world." The experience of "homelessness" that biotech companies hope to eliminate from our lives is, from this standpoint, "a fundamental human experience"—one that discloses to us that by nature human beings can only hope to "become ambiguously at home in this world by coming to terms" with it. Lawler maintains that this message has been obscured by modern habits of thinking that treat every unpleasant occurrence as a pathology to be isolated and expunged. It is ultimately these habits that have led to the biotechnical and pharmacological revolutions of our time—revolutions that seek to "make us completely at home" in the world.

Those who create and market such psychotropic drugs as Ritalin and Prozac treat the human propensity "to be miserable in God's absence" as having a merely "chemical, not a natural or divine, foundation." While this is one possible interpretation of the human capacity to be "moved by love and death," Lawler contends that it is a profoundly insufficient one. Following the novelist Walker Percy, Lawler argues that "we have a right to our anxiety." Far from being "a symptom to be eradicated," it is "a sign or a gateway to the truth about our purpose as human beings. To be born, to live . . . is to be alienated, to be lost or displaced in the cosmos." Hence our pharmacological saviors can accomplish their goals only by cutting us off from the truth and persuading us to live a lie in its place.

None of these themes are new to Lawler, professor of government at Berry College in Georgia. In a series of thoughtful books and as the editor of our most consistently engaging academic journal of political philosophy (*Perspectives on Political Science*), Lawler has established himself as a provocative and original thinker. Influenced by his fellow Southerners, Percy and Flannery O'Connor, no less than the political ideas of Leo Strauss, Lawler has managed to carve out a distinctively Christian position in the field of political theory. In *The Restless Mind* (1993), he introduced us to a deeply Pascalian Tocqueville who was primarily concerned that liberty would be extinguished by the materialist

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pantheism that is "the most seductive and consistent democratic intellectual doctrine." In *Postmodernism Rightly Understood* (1999), he argued that contemporary skepticism about modernity, far from issuing in antifoundationalist nihilism, actually makes possible a turn to Thomistic realism in American thought. And now, in *Aliens in America*, he gives us a glimpse of what such realism looks like.

In his opening chapters, Lawler takes very seriously an account of contemporary American life that can be found, with minor variations, in the writings of a diverse collection of authors: David Brooks, Alan Wolfe, Richard Rorty, Allan Bloom, Francis Fukuyama, Carl Sagan, and others. All of these writers portray America today as a "therapeutic democracy" and Americans themselves as easygoing, nonjudgmental moral libertarians who are primarily concerned with material comforts. They would gladly sell their souls for immortality, a "perfect baby," and an end to sickness and suffering of any kind. Some of the authors (like Bloom and, in certain passages, Brooks and Fukuyama) lament this development, coming close to describing Americans as Nietzschean "last men" with "flat souls." Others (like Wolfe, Rorty, Sagan, and, in different passages, Brooks and Fukuyama) celebrate it as a triumph of greater democracy and tolerance.

Lawler concedes that both groups of authors have put their fingers on something very important about American life today—and he clearly sides with the former group in concluding that "the post-Cold War threat to the human soul is in some respects unprecedented, and it is very real." Yet he rejects the diagnosis proposed by most of these critics. He accuses Bloom and others of presenting "at best a reductionistic caricature of American souls today." Americans have not been transformed into subhuman automatons hell-bent on hedonistic satisfaction. On the contrary, they still experience moments of "human greatness and misery." What's distinctive about our time is not that we've ceased to strive for anything higher than leisure and entertainment; it's that various "experts" and "pragmatists" have "deprive[d] us of the words that allow us to understand, and so live well with, our experiences." The desire to use scientific and medical expertise to redeem us from the most challenging of these experiences arises out of the inability to adequately describe and thus derive meaning from them.

Lawler maintains that conservative critics of current trends do little good by reinforcing the view that the souls of Americans have undergone some kind of fundamental degradation. Instead, they should be working to revive a vocabulary that can do justice to the full range of human experiences in all times and places, including the present. But description of such experiences is not enough. In Lawler's view, "Human nature as a distinctive point of pride and as a good in itself must be defended as never before. We must show the goodness of Being and human beings in spite of human misery." Against Bloom's suggestions in *The Closing of the American Mind* for reviving liberal education, Lawler argues that "it is not enough to defend the rare and questionable experiences of the philosopher," for "the philosophers have not done well in defending the goodness of ordinary human lives." In fact, "the experience of the goodness of human being is characteristi-

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cally and best articulated by religion," and by the Judeo-Christian tradition in particular.

Much of *Aliens in America* is devoted to showing that religion was viewed by the American founders "primarily [as] an instrument for the preservation of liberal democracy," and that present circumstances demand that it be defended far more robustly: "Liberal democracy now has to be justified perhaps more than ever by the truth and goodness of religion." He finds some indications of how to undertake such a justification in the work of John Courtney Murray. According to Lawler, Murray rightly found the Christian notion of the dignity of the person implied in the First Amendment—an implication that "correct[s] the impression given by the unamended Constitution's apparent indifference to the existence of God." The Bill of Rights, combined with the ringing rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence, shows that what the American founders built was shaped more "by what they were given by tradition or God" than by secular, Lockean principles. Moreover, Lawler follows Murray as well as the nineteenth-century American Catholic thinker Orestes Brownson in concluding that the founders "built well because they let themselves, to some extent unconsciously, be guided by the invincible facts about human nature and American tradition." In other words, "their practice was better than their theory." And Murray's writings serve as a model of how to provide a better theory to "justify and so perpetuate their project—the constitutional order they created under God—in our time."

But, for Lawler, even more useful than Murray's works are the writings of Percy and Tocqueville. In his concluding chapter, Lawler contends that both thinkers deserve to be recognized as "Christian realists" because they remain open to the aristocratic as well as democratic—the hierarchical as well as egalitarian—dimensions of human life to an extent that is exceedingly rare in the tradition of Western thought. In the end, both of them clearly choose "justice over excellence," but they also recognize the need to give human distinctiveness and virtue their due "against those who would, in the name of democracy, deny them."

They thus also provide us with an account of human life capable of keeping alive the awareness that, although we ought to fight for fairness in this world, we must never confuse that struggle—especially when it tempts us to medicate ourselves into an ersatz happiness—with our ultimate and highest goal. The fact remains that "our true home lies elsewhere, and . . . this fact is the most reasonable explanation of our experiences of homelessness." Far from being something to be treated as a defect, "our hopes and fears in this world" are, in words that Lawler quotes from Percy, "rooted in 'the strange human creature himself,' 'an admixture'—of good and evil, grace and the demonic, . . . courage and cowardice." As Lawler writes in his concluding sentence, which provides the subtitle to his book, our "inability to be more than ambiguously at home is the strange truth about our souls."

This is Lawler's simple lesson—timeless, but often forgotten in our time, as advances in biotechnology make the advent of Aldous Huxley's "brave new world," and thus C. S. Lewis' "abolition of man," more likely with each passing day. While his quirky style of writing—which combines long, occasionally tedious paraphrases of arguments by other authors with dense patches of original analysis and criticism—detracts at times from his argument, the power and importance of that argument is undeniable. As

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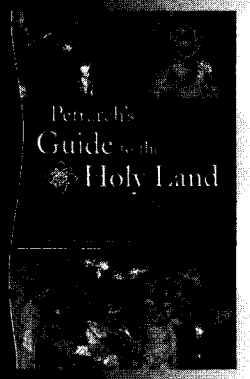

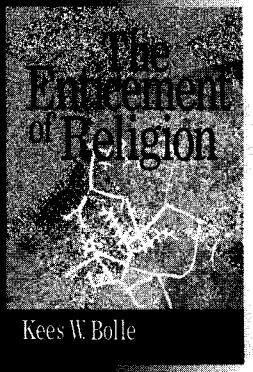

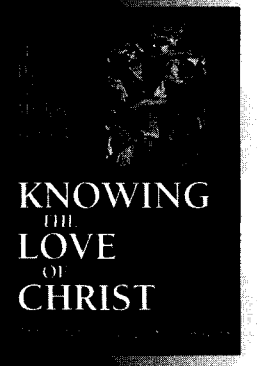

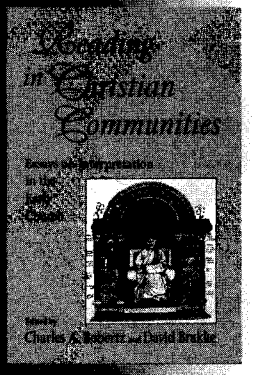

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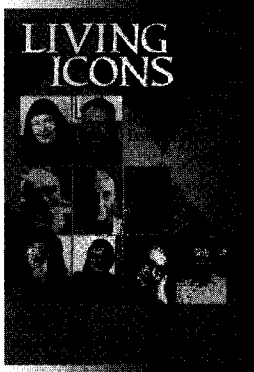

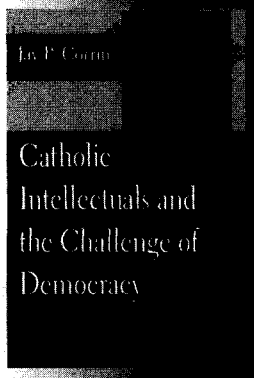

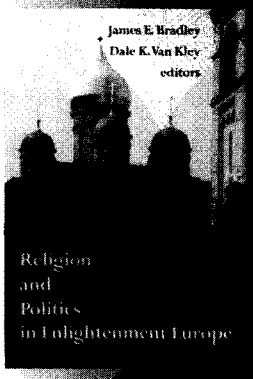

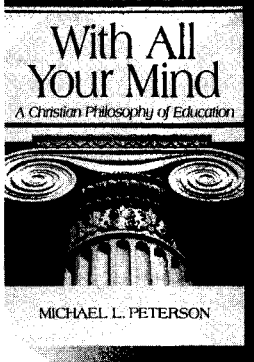

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Wretched Judicial Excess

The Implosion of American Federalism. By Robert F. Nagel. *Oxford University Press. 209 pp. $16.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Michael M. Uhlmann**

Next to the exponential growth of government itself, the most noteworthy feature of American political institutions in the past half-century has been the rise and acceptance of judicial supremacy. The Supreme Court is widely viewed today not only as the principal guarantor of the people's liberties but as the definitive voice of constitutional meaning. Nothing could be more alien to the American political tradition or to the thought of the founders. In the framers' view, the primary security for rights lay in the Constitution's artfully balanced structural attributes—federalism, separation of powers, bicameralism, and staggered elections. The judiciary would play a decidedly secondary, if occasionally important, role. Vesting the Supreme Court with more or less exclusive authority to interpret the Constitution would have struck the framers (and most Americans prior to the present era) as a dangerous idea.

How this radical shift came about is a long and complicated story whose intellectual foundations were laid in the Progressive movement's critique of the founding. They dismissed the idea of natural rights as so much eighteenth-century philosophical baggage and made the structural Constitution seem like a conspiracy hatched by the rich to frustrate popular will. The Progressive indictment paved the way for an even more cynical assault against the founding: the rubric of legal realism, which reduced law to the will of the lawmaker. When Charles Evans Hughes remarked that the Constitution is what the Court says it is, he perfectly captured the essence of legal realism.

Legal realism by turns morphed into diverse forms of postmodernism or overt nihilism, under whose aegis

Michael M. Uhlmann *is Adjunct Professor of American Government at Claremont Graduate University.*

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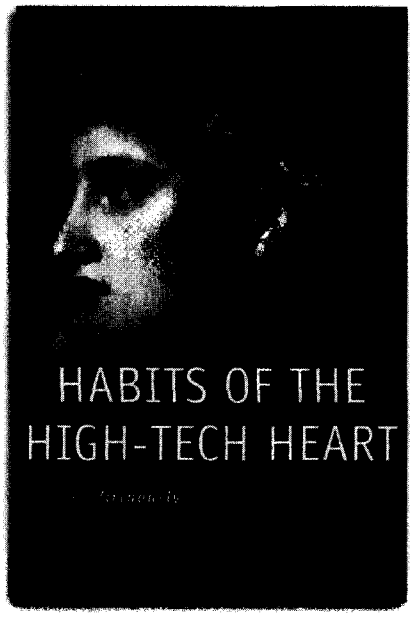

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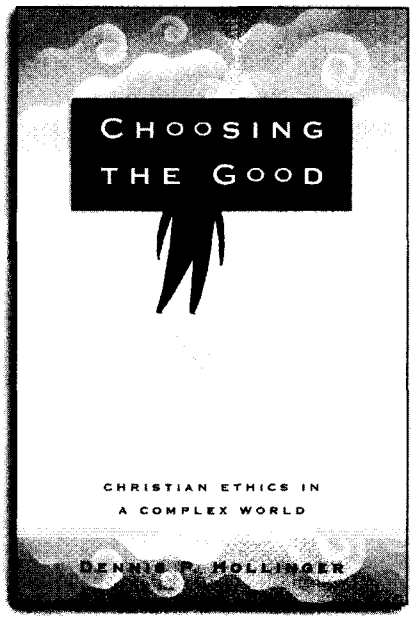

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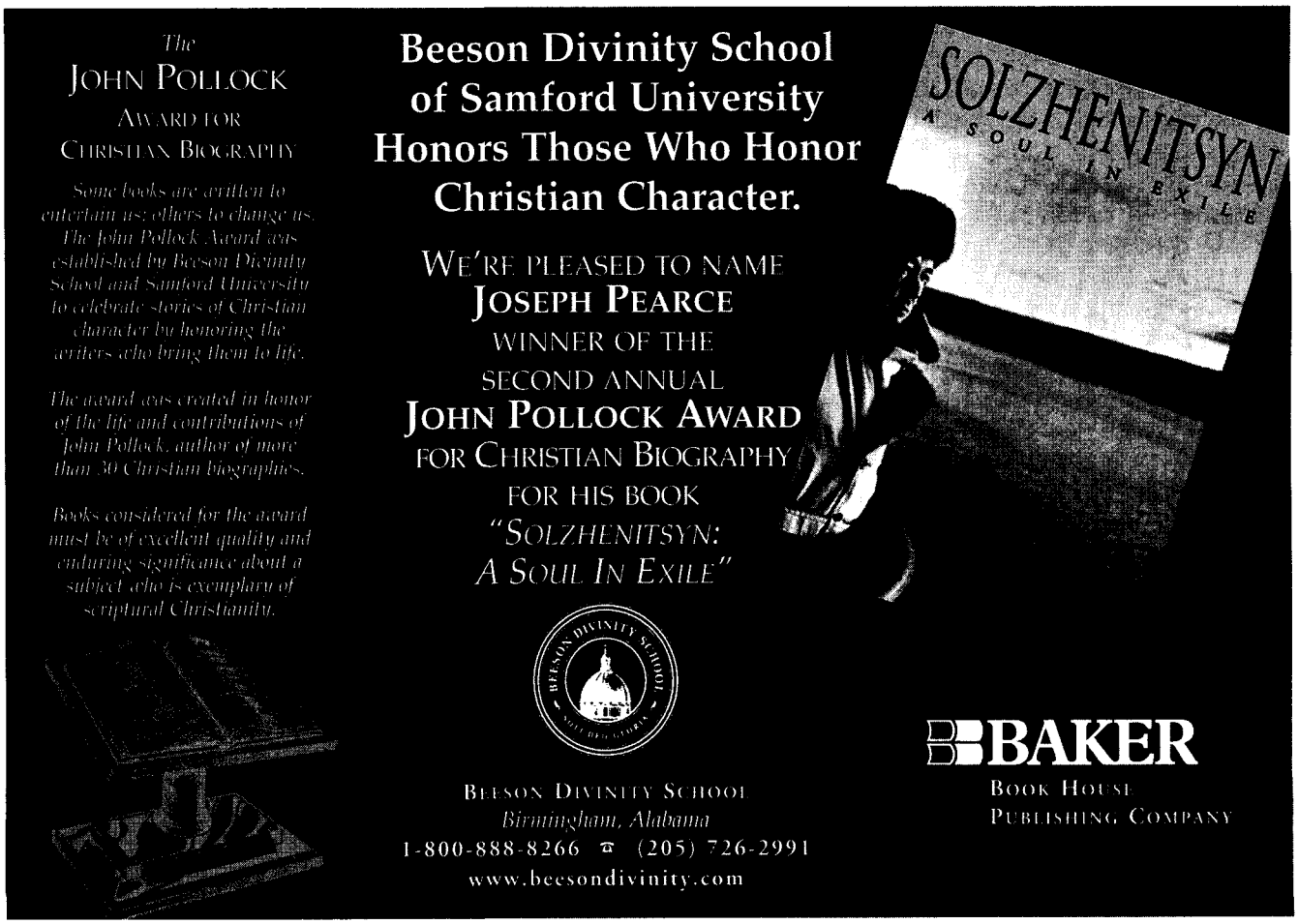
the Constitution has become little more than warm plastic to be molded in accordance with the policy preferences of dominant legal actors. Constitutional advocacy is now widely understood in the law schools as a species of high-toned intellectual gamesmanship. In the end, law is all about power—how to get it and how to use it. Study of the Constitution has been displaced by study of the collective musings of professors and federal appellate judges, particularly those who evangelize on behalf of the "living Constitution." By that is meant a Constitution remade in the image and likeness of their own policy preferences, masked in the language of democratic aspirations and bearing only a semantic resemblance to the Constitution of 1787.

The principal beneficiary of this new dispensation has been the Supreme Court, which increasingly sees itself as the authoritative voice of democratic ideals. The Court's rulings in cases and controversies have always been recognized as final, but until fairly recently, its constitutional rationales were open to dispute. Hence Abraham Lincoln's position on *Dred Scott*: the Court's holding bound the parties to the litigation, but the political branches were free to countermand its reasoning. If public policy on "vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed" by the Supreme Court, Lincoln said, "the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal."

Lincoln's argument is not much honored these days. Most of the professoriate would read it as self-justifying political opportunism. Liberal Justices, who believe that the Court's opinions bind not only the parties before it, but the conscience of the nation, would consider Lincoln a dangerous man. Consider, for example, the instruction of the Court in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992):

> Like the character of an individual, the legitimacy of the Court must be earned over time. So, indeed, must be the character of a nation of people who aspire to live according to the rule of law. Their belief in themselves as such a people is not readily separable from their understanding of the Court invested with the authority to decide their constitutional cases and speak before all others for their constitutional ideals. If the Court's legitimacy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> should be undermined, then so would the country be in its very ability to see itself through its constitutional ideals.

To this astonishing claim Robert F. Nagel would reply: nonsense. For the Court to say that its rulings somehow embody the aspirations of the people not only conflicts with our constitutional principles and history, it haughtily presumes, even as it encourages, a servile disposition utterly inconsistent with the spirit of a free people. A judicial imperium, Nagel would say, is not the government our forefathers fought for.

Over the past fifteen years, Professor Nagel, who teaches at the University of Colorado School of Law, has established himself as one of our most forceful critics of judicial supremacy. No one does better at exposing the elaborate intellectual pretense that undergirds much of contemporary constitutional argument. His surgical dissection of leading cases is always elegant, often producing surprising results that prompt deeper reflection. In contrast to many of his peers, Nagel sees the work of the Supreme Court within a broad cultural context. In an earlier work, *Judicial Power and American Character* (1994), he argued that the rise of judicial power both reflects and exacerbates a deep public malaise about the nation's declining moral condition. Rather than addressing that decline, we rely upon the judiciary to provide us with a false sense of security and certainty. We are not very different from the fairy-tale citizens who praised the emperor's new clothes.

The same theme is further elaborated in *The Implosion of American Federalism*. As Nagel's title implies, federalism's lot is not a happy one. If it isn't dead yet, it's certainly gasping for breath, notwithstanding the fact that the Court has in recent years sought to cabin congressional intrusion on the presumptive prerogatives of the states. Many conservatives were cheered by *U.S. v. Lopez* (1995), the first case in nearly sixty years to impose limits on congressional power to regulate commerce.

Although he agrees with the result in *Lopez* and in other cases that purport to shore up the states, Nagel is dubious about their long-run importance. For one thing, the rules elaborated in most of these cases can easily be overcome through clever tweaking of statutory language that leaves federal power essentially intact. For another, although the Court may occasionally trim congressional excess at the margins, it is unlikely to engage Congress in a head-on struggle. Those who expect the Court to lead a revival of federalism are looking in the wrong place. Indeed, Nagel argues, the true measure of federalism's weakness consists precisely in the belief that we must look to the Court to make things right. The decline of federalism and the rise of judicial supremacy, in short, are the opposite sides of a single coin.

A truly robust federalism, in Nagel's view, requires not only a legal structure conducive to its maintenance, but a settled disposition on the part of the people in favor of local diversity and prerogative, and a disciplined love of liberty that transcends the desire for immediate gratification. None of these, he says, are to be found in great abundance these days. Instead, he finds a desire to avoid risk, an impatience with conflict, and a servile yearning for simple solutions decreed by centralized authority. These are not the hallmarks of a people that wishes to remain free. Indeed, says Nagel, "we may be witnessing the rapid realization of Tocqueville's foreboding vision of a mass of striving but discontented individuals 'endeavoring to procure . . . the pleasures with which they glut their lives' under the shadow of one 'immense and tutelary power.'"

A glum prognosis, to be sure, but one that is hard to take issue with. Virtually every important change in American social policy in the past two generations has been driven, if not initiated, by the judiciary. The Supreme Court has rewritten many of our cultural rules on the most sensitive matters, touching everything from sexual mores and the family to the place of

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religion in the social order. The striking feature in the Court's agenda is not only its radical departure from constitutional text and custom, nor even its almost contemptuous disregard for the expressed will of representative bodies. The remarkable thing is that, despite occasional wailing about wretched judicial excess, the American people tolerate it.

Not only do we willingly yield our responsibilities and liberties, Nagel contends, but we lie to ourselves when we do so. In his concluding chapter, "Lies and Nationhood," Nagel argues that the Clinton impeachment controversy demonstrates how deeply the cynicism of the legal elite has cut into common culture. The President's artful conjugation of "is," in Nagel's view, did not differ qualitatively from the routine pangloss of the professorial class when, for example, it argues without blushing that the right to abortion is deeply rooted in our constitutional tradition. Clinton's defense was but a particular application of the wink-and-nod sophistry that today passes for sophisticated legal advocacy. Everyone knew he had lied and dishonored the office of the President, but a majority of the public comforted itself either by pretending he hadn't, or if he had, by pretending it didn't matter. The entire sorry episode, Nagel concludes, confirms that "our system rests precariously on the edge of systematized dishonesty."

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The Reality of Euthanasia

THE CASE AGAINST ASSISTED SUICIDE: FOR THE RIGHT TO END-OF-LIFE CARE. Edited by KATHLEEN FOLEY, M.D. and HERBERT HENDIN, M.D. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 392 pp. $49.95.*

Reviewed by **Eric Chevlen**

THE ONGOING public debate over the legalization of assisted suicide draws participants whose primary concern is not the issue itself but who find it the ideal occasion to advance collateral social initiatives. Thus, as he revealed in the haunting polemic with which he began his notorious public career (*Prescription: Medicide* [1991]), Jack Kevorkian was not particularly concerned about the issue of legalized assisted suicide. Rather, he

ERIC CHEVLEN, M.D., *is a pain and palliative care specialist and coauthor, with Wesley J. Smith, of* Power Over Pain: How to Get the Pain Control You Need (2002).

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saw assisted suicide as the ideal way to advance his real agenda, the legalization of human vivisection.

The editors of *The Case Against Assisted Suicide: For the Right to End-of-Life Care*, Drs. Kathleen Foley and Herbert Hendin, are renowned clinicians, researchers, and teachers. And they too—while not otherwise to be compared to the serial mercy killer of Michigan—seem to approach the debate over assisted suicide as an opportunity to promote *their* agenda. In the case of Foley and Hendin, that agenda is improvement in the palliative care of terminally ill patients. As the comedian says, not that there's anything wrong with that. Still, there is a significant difference between opposing assisted suicide on deontological grounds and using such opposition to advocate a change in health care policy.

But surprisingly, it is this very weakness (from the purist's point of view) that gives this splendid collection of essays its strength. None of the essays argues against assisted suicide and euthanasia simply because killing is wrong. Rather, each one points out how legalization of such practices would achieve a goal that is the opposite of the one its supporters claim it would. Speaking concretely, it would yield less relief of suffering, less patient autonomy, corruption of the practice of medicine, and a decline in the quality of palliative care. And then there really is the pesky problem of the slippery slope.

The list of contributors—only a few of them can be mentioned here—reads like a *Who's Who* of palliative medicine and medical philosophy. For example, Professor Harvey Chochinov, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Manitoba and his colleague Dr. Leonard Schwartz discuss the prevalence of treatable depression among the terminally ill. More importantly, they describe the existential factors that lead some to seek hastening of death. They point out that fear of abandonment is a terrible concern of the dying. In this regard, it is worth recalling that assisted suicide has been called "abandonment institutionalized."

Dame Cicely Saunders is recognized as the founder of the modern hospice movement. Any patient who now enjoys good pain control by taking a sustained-release opioid owes her a debt of gratitude for her discovery of the importance of dosing opioids around-the-clock rather than "as needed" for pain. (The fundamental importance of that discovery is underscored by the fact that it now seems

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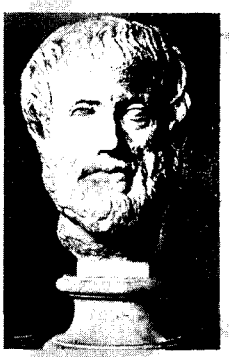

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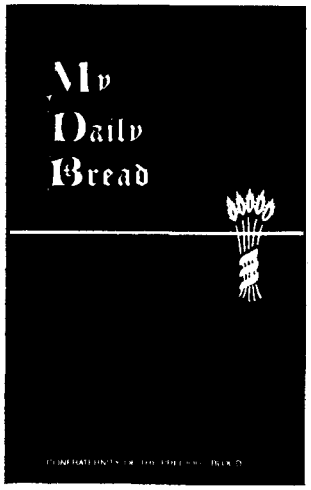

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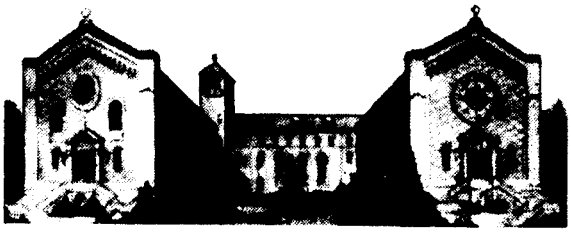

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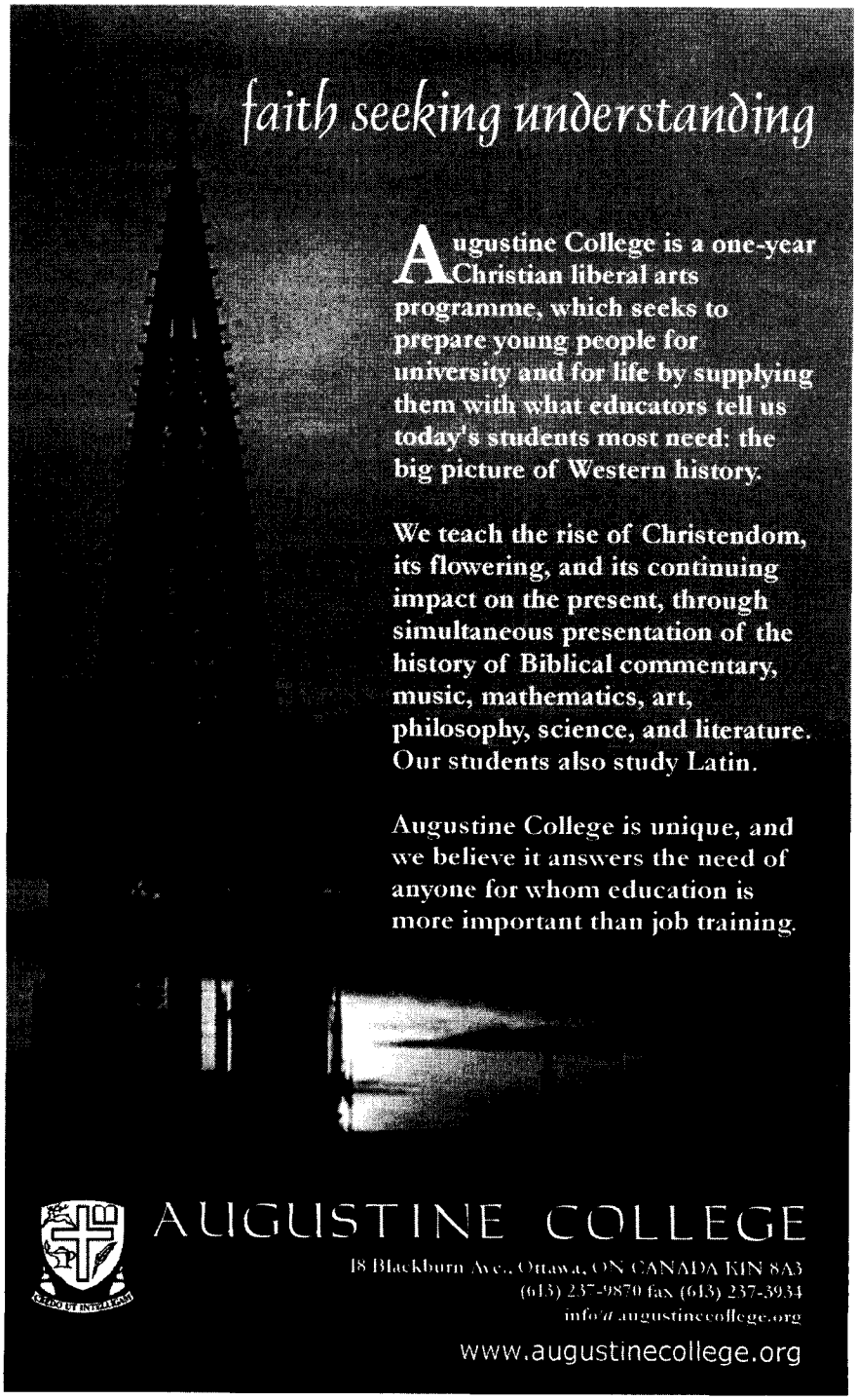
obvious.) She describes how hospice care has obviated the desire for assisted suicide in many patients and how legalizing suicide would "undermine the right for respect and care for a great many vulnerable, already disadvantaged, people."

Attorney Diane Coleman, president of the disabilities rights group Not Dead Yet, demonstrates how the same society that cannot be bothered to provide the necessary assistance to enhance the lives of disabled people seems to jump to support any disabled person's request for assisted suicide. Ordinarily a request for assisted suicide from a young woman experiencing a recent miscarriage, impending divorce, death of a brother, and the cancer diagnosis of her mother would be recognized for what it is—the desperate cry of a clinically depressed person. But when that person was Elizabeth Bouvia, "confined" to a wheelchair, a legion of lawyers leaped to secure her right to suicide. "All they see is the wheelchair," as a disabled friend of mine once remarked. Coleman notes the contempt for the disabled that is inherent in laws that would allow assisted suicide on demand.

Assisted suicide is currently legal in Oregon, and its moral equivalent, euthanasia, is now permitted in Holland. Does the real world experience match the dire predictions of its opponents? Sadly, it does that and more. In an earlier book, *Seduced by Death: Doctors, Patients, and the Dutch Cure* (1996), Hendin described how the actual witnessing of the effects of legalized euthanasia, far more than any theoretical consideration, persuaded him of its pernicious impact. In this collection, he updates his observations. It is more than coincidence that palliative care facilities in Holland are among the worst in Europe. Hendin credits Derek Phillips, a sociologist who has lived and worked in the Netherlands for thirty years, with the insight that the Netherlands is a country in which "indifference masquerades as tolerance."

N. Gregory Hamilton, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Oregon Health Sciences University, describes the impact of legalized assisted suicide in Oregon. It has led to a "culture of silence," in which even the censure of doctors assisting in the death of their patients has been forbidden by state law. The annual reports of the Oregon Health Department are designed to obscure the realities, pressures, and ambivalences of the people who die by assisted suicide. The only source of information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for the report is the very doctors who feel the procedure is justified, and who are unrestrained by the long-forgotten oath "to give no deadly medicine to any one, even if asked, nor to suggest any such counsel."

Foley and Hendin conclude their collection of essays with a call to "change the culture." They want doctors to do a better job of recognizing and treating depression in the terminally ill, and of understanding the ambivalence that so often stands behind a call for hastened death. They call for increased resources to better integrate the disabled into the community. They would have the palliation of the Medicare hospice benefit extended beyond its currently defined beneficiaries (terminally ill people expected to live six months or less). Indeed, care of terminally ill people is currently in need of such improvement that there are few aspects of it that would not benefit from a major overhaul.

If severe pain were uncontrollable, that would be a tragedy. That it *is* controllable, but is so seldom properly treated, is not a tragedy but a scandal. The same is true of other distressing symptoms that may plague us in the final months of life. The proper response to this scandal, as amply demonstrated by this book, is not to kill the one in distress. Rather than abandoning him in his anguish and terror, we should be present with him in his suffering—is that not, after all, what the word "compassion" means? The dying deserve the latest scientific palliative interventions, and also the venerable recognition of the intrinsic value of every human life.

Unfortunately, given its frank title, this volume is unlikely to be read by many supporters of assisted suicide. That's a shame, because the book might very well change their opinions. This book is highly recommended to anyone interested in the question of assisted suicide—and to anyone who expects ever to suffer from a fatal illness.

The Science of Everything

A NEW KIND OF SCIENCE. By STEPHEN WOLFRAM. *Wolfram Media, Incorporated. 1,192 pp. $44.95.*

***Reviewed by* Michael J. Behe**

ONE SHOULD HESITATE to review a book that threatens pulling a muscle just by lifting it. Apart from the danger to one's health, it likely will turn out to have been written by: 1) the unabomber or some other crank; 2) a fellow who unwisely declined the services of an editor; or 3) a genius who ranges over subjects way beyond anyone's (that is, my) ability to comment intelligently. Stephen Wolfram's *A New Kind of Science* fits firmly into categories 2 and 3. I'm still undecided about 1.

MICHAEL J. BEHE *is Professor of Biological Sciences at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.*

Wolfram fills almost twelve hundred pages (not counting the index) with discussions of subjects as disparate as free will, the fundamental laws of physics, evolution, the free market, extraterrestrials, and much, much more. In fact, he not only discusses them, but places them in relationship to each other. For example, the index includes entries for "Economics, and extraterrestrial trade" and "Economics, and free will." The sheer breadth of the book elicited several waves of reaction in this reader. At first, a sense of awe that any person could know so much about so much. Next, excitement at the prospect that Wolfram might really be on to something fundamental. But, finally, déjà vu as the subject eventually turned to topics I know something about.

Wolfram is a prodigy even among geniuses, being the youngest ever recipient of a MacArthur Foundation award. He published his first physics paper at age fifteen, earned a Ph.D. from Caltech in a single year, and joined the faculty there at the age of twenty. A few years later he headed to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. By the age of thirty he had written a computer program called "Mathematica" that helps engineers and scientists deal more easily with complicated mathematics. Marketing the software has made him independently wealthy, requiring neither an academic position nor the largesse of government research grants to pursue his interests.

With a start like that it's understandable that Wolfram is enormously self-confident, thinking he can entirely change the way science views

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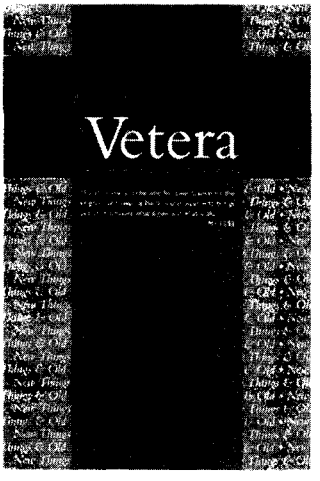
the world—pretty much by himself, thank you very much. For the past decade he has closeted himself in his study, working on his book and neither publishing his interim results nor attending scientific meetings. Yet the word leaked out that he was writing a putative scientific blockbuster, and, given Wolfram's reputation, in some circles the book has been very eagerly anticipated.

The Wolfram phenomenon has gotten quite a ride from the media, too. A Lexis-Nexis search on the word "wolfram" shows 193 articles in the past six months, including stories in *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, and the *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, and *Times* of London. The *New York Times* has run three articles in the past few months, one from the science desk, another from the arts and ideas desk, plus an official book review. The leading science journal *Nature* ran an article plus a book review.

Certainly the bulk of the attention is due to Wolfram's impressive biography and mysterious ways. But surely some of the anticipation can be traced to widespread awareness that something big is missing from our understanding of the world. Too many problems that should have been solved by now remain intractable—problems like forecasting the weather or the course of epidemics, understanding the origin of life or the behavior of economic markets, or even predicting things as trivial as how a rising column of smoke will curl. There must be some simple trick or basic insight, the thinking goes, that is being overlooked. Once we figure out the trick, everything will fall into place. In the past few decades there have been a number of candidates for this New Insight—catastrophe theory, chaos theory, complexity theory. All claimed to have wide-ranging implications, from physics to economics and social interactions. All have been trumpeted for a while. None have lived up to the hype.

Although Wolfram draws connections to virtually every corner of the universe, *A New Kind of Science* is basically a book about computing. In particular, Wolfram investigates a type of computer program called a cellular automaton (CA). To get the gist of what a CA does, imagine a very large piece of graph paper, with a grid of squares. In the middle of the top line color one square black. Now move down a line and choose a simple rule to decide if the square underneath should be blackened or not. For example, one rule might be to color a square black on the next line if the square directly above it was itself black, its left hand neighbor was also black, and its right hand neighbor was white. Now move down another line and apply the same rule again. Repeat forever. There are exactly 256 such rules (Wolfram provides pictures of over half of them), where the outcome depends only on nearest-neighbors. Most of the rules yield pretty simple patterns—a solid black triangle, a triangle with alternating white and black squares, and so on.

But some rules produce remarkably complex patterns. Some show nested arrangements of triangles



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within triangles, while others yield triangles in which the left side consists of straight lines, but the right side swirls with larger and smaller triangles in no discernible pattern. With other rules a regular pattern is suddenly cut off by a random jagged line of dots apparently coming out of left field. Wolfram stresses that, unlike previous ideas such as chaos theory, where randomness and uncertainty derived from the physical environment, the randomness of CAs is generated by a simple, regular, discrete, numerical process. We start with the simplicity of pure integers, yet somehow end up with capriciousness and unpredictability.

From this basic result, Wolfram draws a number of large conclusions. He claims that since the colors of squares in some CAs appear random, there is no way to predict ahead of time what color a given square will be when the computer program is run. This illustrates a principle he calls computational irreducibility. In short, the outcome of many types of processes cannot be calculated from an equation or set of equations. There is no mathematical shortcut. One simply has to watch the actual process unfold to see what will happen. This pretty much spells doom to long-range weather forecasting. Another result is that some CAs can act as "universal computers," performing any calculation that a desktop computer can perform. For example, he shows that the output of a particular CA contains lines spaced according to the prime numbers.

Another big conclusion is called the Principle of Computational Equivalence (Wolfram's capitalization). This is a little harder to grasp. Wolfram summarizes it this way: "Whenever one sees behavior that is not obviously simple—in essentially any system—it can be thought of as corresponding to a computation of equivalent sophistication." One consequence, he thinks, is that our minds cannot grasp most complex processes because those processes have the same computational sophistication as our brains. Our thinking fails to keep up with the processes.

MUCH OF THIS is interesting and, for all I know, may have important implications for mathematics and computational theory. But Wolfram wants his work to go beyond computation to explain all of nature. Here he is unconvincing. The problem is that there are no obvious physical rules in nature that correspond even to Wolfram's simplest computer CAs, let alone to the more complex ones. The fact that a program running on a computer lights up pixels in a pattern reminiscent of, say, curling cigarette smoke does not at all mean that the same causes underlie both the computer image and the real smoke.

When Wolfram turns to biological evolution he, like proponents of complexity theory before him, rudely dismisses Darwinian theory as overblown. But, again like those before him, Wolfram defends his ideas by pointing to a few simple features of life that may possibly fit with his math while passing over in silence the more complex underlying features that don't. He writes, for example, that the geometric patterns of coloration in butterflies and sea shells may arise from simple physical constraints rather than specific coding in DNA. Well, maybe so. But the pigments that cause the coloration are the products of enzymes that are made by ribosomes that contain scores of complex macromolecular components. Do CAs have anything to do with that? Wolfram give us no reason to think so.

These examples of overreaching, though disappointing, are at least understandable. A more serious problem arises at a more fundamental level. Wolfram emphasizes that underwriting much of his thinking is a peculiar presupposition: "All processes, whether they are produced by human effort or occur spontaneously in nature, can be viewed as computations." And he does mean *all* processes. In his view, rocks rolling down a hill are computers, taking input at each step and updating the system according to a set of rules, just as a PC does. Indeed, "fluid turbulence in the gas around a star" has made "more computation than has by most measures ever been done throughout the whole course of human intellectual history." Moreover, in the same physical, unknowing sense, the human brain is only a computer. The main reason Wolfram thinks his ideas can be applied to all of nature is because by this definition the universe itself is a computer.

Stripped of the computer talk, this is just good old-fashioned materialism: in either a desktop computer, the universe at large, or a human brain,

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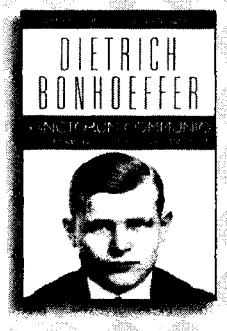

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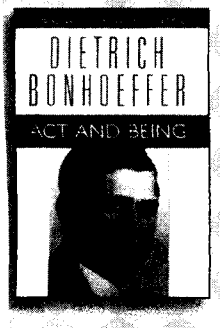

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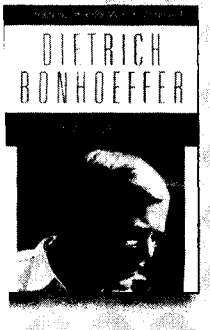

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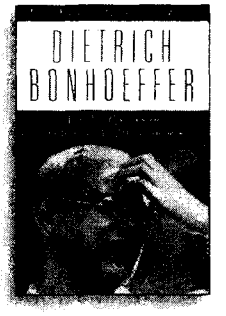

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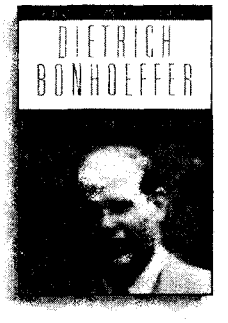

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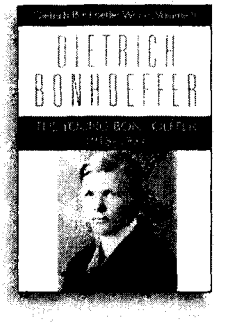

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there's nothing but particles bouncing around. That's fine with Wolfram, who repeatedly states that one of his goals is to remove all notions of purpose from science. But when a definition of computation explicitly repudiates the mind that comprehends the calculations, we quickly descend into absurdity. When prodded in a *New York Times* interview, Wolfram agreed that a bucket of nails rusting quietly in a corner is a universal computer, comparable in pertinent features to the human mind. So, according to his assumptions, in the end Wolfram's own genius can be reduced to the equivalent of a bucket of rusty nails. One notes the irony that Wolfram wrote his book to overcome faulty premises in science.

BRIEFLY NOTED

ANGELS OF DEATH: EXPLORING THE EUTHANASIA UNDERGROUND. By ROGER S. MAGNUSSON. *Yale University Press. 306 pp. $35.*

Roger S. Magnusson opines that mercy killing should be legalized and regulated because, in no small part, "illicit euthanasia" is already practiced. But so too are incest and self-mutilation, and no reasonable person would suggest that those activities should be given the sanction of law. To make his argument, Magnusson relies primarily on an analysis of the Dutch experience with euthanasia and upon anecdotes from the euthanasia "underground," particularly among AIDS patients. Not only does he fail to note the remarkable success of St. Christopher's Hospice in London with treating AIDS patients, which demonstrates that the delivery of good palliative care and emotional support leads to remarkably few requests for assisted suicide, but his analysis of Dutch euthanasia is superficial. Magnusson does not even reference the splendid and thorough articles by Dr. Herbert Hendin on the Dutch experience, nor his authoritative book, *Seduced by Death* (1996). Hendin isn't even listed in the index, and his book is missing from the bibliography. There is a good reason for this omission. Confronting the work of an opponent of euthanasia as powerful as Hendin—the one man who has most thoroughly analyzed the insidiousness of the Dutch way of death—would make it exceedingly difficult to maintain that guidelines will protect against abuse. Not only do Dutch doctors kill people who are not terminally ill, which Magnusson mentions but generally glosses over, but some pediatricians and neonatologists have moved euthanasia into the pediatric ward. (According to the *Lancet*, about eight percent of all babies who die in the Netherlands are killed by their own doctors, some without parental consent.) Nor does the author mention that when euthanasia officially became legal earlier this year, the Dutch Minister of Health proposed that old people who are "tired of life" have access to suicide pills. As for the author's assertion that euthanasia would not be about money, he apparently hasn't read the statement of Hemlock Society founder Derek Humphry, according to which saving money is the "unstated argument" in favor of euthanasia. Euthanasia advocates are going to have to do better than this if they want to persuade thoughtful citizens of their dark agenda.

— Wesley J. Smith

THE PATIENT AS PERSON: EXPLORATIONS IN MEDICAL ETHICS. By PAUL RAMSEY. Second edition. *Yale University Press. 320 pp. $17.95 paper.*

The reissuing of Paul Ramsey's *The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics* could not be more timely. The occasion is the thirtieth anniversary of the Lyman Beecher Lecture series, a multidisciplinary and interreligious conference that featured the esteemed Princeton University ethicist. Given the ever more secular cast of academic "bioethics," Ramsey's distinctive Christian perspective toward medical ethics is refreshing. For Ramsey, ethical reflection is inevitably rooted in the biblical notion of covenant. He viewed human sanctity and dignity, buttressed by a faithfulness to our social commitments, as preconditions for a proper relationship between caregiver and patient. His approach remains a model for ethical discourse, whether in a religious or secular context. Consent as a form of loyalty, the difficulty of defining personhood and death, the necessity of caring for the dying, the moral dilemmas involved in harvesting of organs, research on human subjects, and the use of medical

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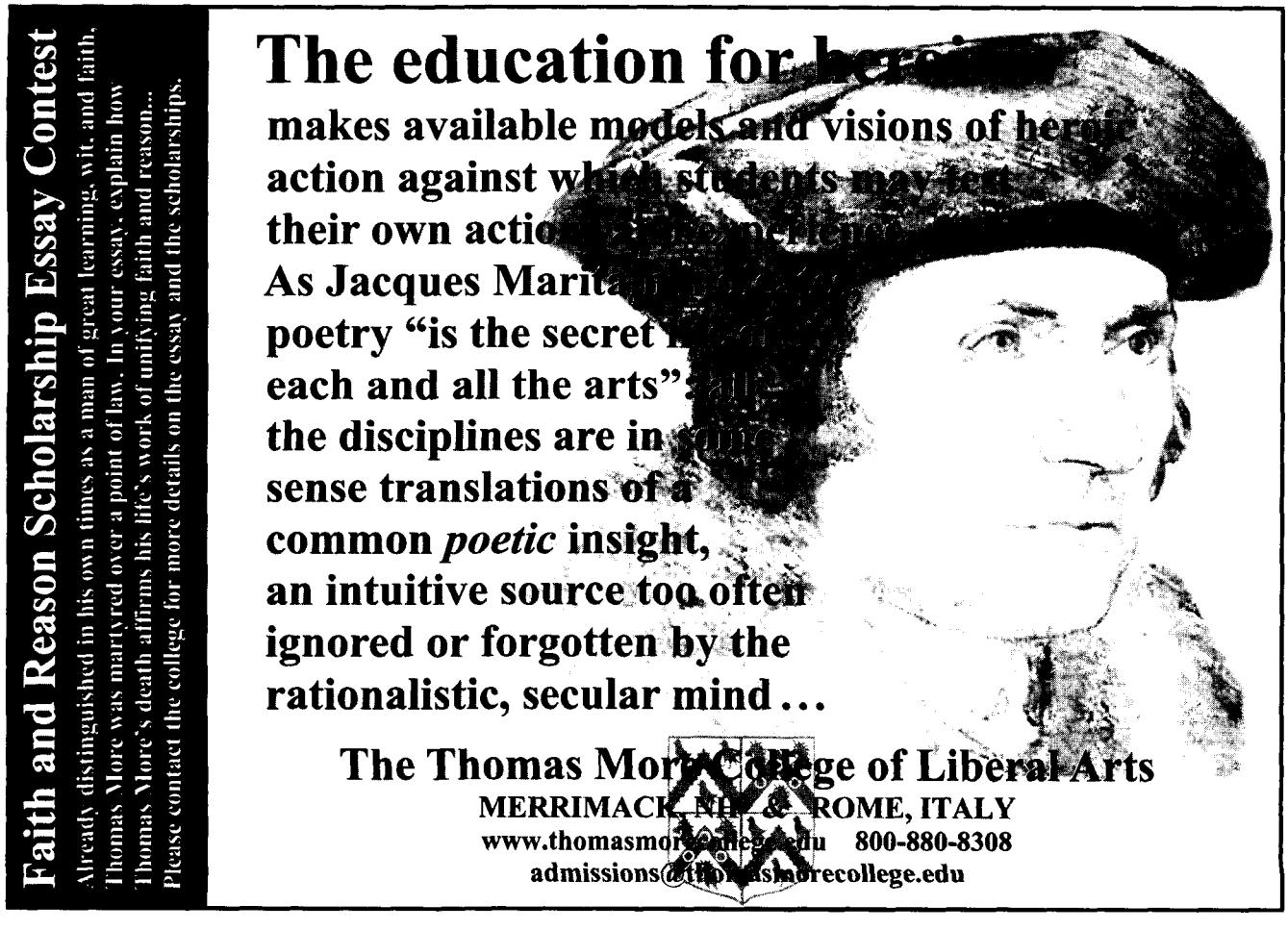
resources—Ramsey's reflections on these and related issues remain as pertinent today as they were three decades ago. The difference, however, is that the patient—whether prenatal, neonatal, infirm, or genetically exceptional—is inclined to be viewed less as a "person" today than he was when Ramsey delivered his lectures.

—J. Daryl Charles

Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam. By Gilles Kepel. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts. *Harvard University Press. 454 pp. $29.95.*

One way to become a famous intellectual in France is to advance a counter-intuitive (read: nonsensical) thesis. By this standard, Kepel excels, for he argues that militant Islam is in decline and manages to fill 376 pages of text with examples and arguments meant to support the idea. His only fault is a certain lack of originality, given that a colleague, Olivier Roy, beat him to the punch by publishing *L'Echec de l'Islam politique* a full eight years earlier. Both scholars, it bears noting, are much lionized and deeply influential in France. Kepel's take differs from Roy's in that the latter made much of a distinction between two nearly identical streams of militant Islam (which he dubbed Islamism and neofundamentalism), while Kepel dismisses militant Islam on sociological grounds. It was doing well in the 1980s, he claims, but fell apart in the 1990s due to an inability of the Islamists to keep together its alliance of the young urban poor and the devout middle class. What about September 11, 2001? Kepel breezily replies to the question by asserting that it was a mere "provocation" that only confirms the "waning" of militant Islam. In his view, it was nothing but "an attempt to reverse a process in decline with a paroxysm of destructive violence." No better is Kepel's fluency with facts. To cite a random sampling of the most egregious errors: he claims that the entire decade of the 1980s was "overshadowed by a power struggle between the Saudi monarchy and Khomeini's Iran" (forgetting a small episode called the Iran-Iraq war); he falsely attributes to the U.S. government the goal of supplying aid to the Afghans during the 1980s to precipitate the collapse of the Soviet Union (the goal was far more limited and defensive); he believes that the *umma* is the unit ruled by the laws of Islam (this is the body of all Muslims; *Dar al-Islam* is what he meant to say); and he somehow fails to find any signs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of active support in the Muslim world for al-Qaeda's long-term objectives (to which one can only ask, where was he during September and October of 2001?).

— *Daniel Pipes*

THE NEW FAITHFUL: WHY YOUNG ADULTS ARE EMBRACING CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY. By COLLEEN CARROLL. *Loyola. 306 pp. $19.95.*

The author examines twenty- and thirty-something adults who are taking God and church seriously for the first time in their lives. Fed up with boomer-era relativism and its influence on mainstream American Christianity, these "new faithful" embrace not only orthodox worship but also what Carroll calls its "theological and moral roots." As she points out, these young adults are not just anybody; many of them come from our cultural elite: lawyers, models, doctors, media professionals, and so on. But unlike those liberal members of the elite who get so much attention, these young believers have had enough of "secular success" and the self-absorbed lifestyle that often accompanies it. They yearn for community, self-sacrifice, liturgy, and a divine Christ—all of which lifts their gaze from hedonistic temptation and teaches them how to live well. Consequently, they often develop a vision for social and political justice, ministries of mercy, and other outward manifestations of personal holiness. If the author's background as a journalist helps to contribute to the liveliness of her narrative, it also tends to limit her ability to analyze the trend she identifies. Aren't there important differences between Catholic and Protestant versions of the movement? What, precisely, is the meaning of the word "secular" in this context? Is the movement likely to last or will it quickly fade like so many other fads in modern American life? All of these questions surface, but none are addressed thoroughly. On the other hand, Carroll never promises to do more than "paint the broad strokes of a phenomenon that has gone largely unnoticed in the secular media and even within the Church." Which she does, quite well.

— *Aaron Belz*

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--Pope John Paul II

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THE DAWN OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY: SELECTED ESSAYS FROM A WITNESS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By RAYMOND ARON. Translated by Barbara Bray. Edited by Yair Reiner, with an introduction by Tony Judt. *Basic. 520 pp. $35.*

Raymond Aron (1905-1983), French political philosopher and sociologist, intransigent critic of ideology and sober defender of liberal democracy, was arguably the best political analyst of the twentieth century. From an American standpoint, the main drama of the latter part of the last century involved three conspicuous facts: the rise of ideological movements and regimes, the awesome powers unleashed by technological science, and the need to defend liberal democracies against their antiliberal adversaries. In addition to these challenges, Europe faced its own distinct problems, including the weakening of the nation-state, the loss of colonial empires, and, in turn, a diminishing role in world affairs. Aron analyzes all of these issues magisterially in this anthology. In writings spanning four decades he in effect produced a learned, incisive, and richly textured "history of the twentieth century" (the title of the French version of the collection). Its main sections indicate as much: "Nations and Empires"; "From Sarajevo to Hiroshima"; "The Secular Religions"; "The Imperial Republic"; "The End of Colonial Empires"; and the volume's theoretically rich concluding meditation on the approaching "Dawn of Universal History" (which we prefer to describe, somewhat less precisely, as "globalization"). In the section on "secular religions" (a phrase Aron himself coined in 1944), he launches a powerful and still pertinent critique of ideologies of the right and the left that have served as ersatz substitutes for "transcendent faith." Also of interest are his prescient speculations about the various futures available to Europe after the demise of the bipo-

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lar world of the Cold War and America's unique character as an "imperial republic."

— *Paul Seaton*

On Pascal. By Douglas Groothuis. *Wadsworth. 97 pp. $15.95.*

Readers approaching Blaise Pascal's great work of Christian apologetics, the *Pensées*, for the first time can be excused for thinking that the book consists only of aphorisms. Actually, Pascal had planned a complete work to be called *An Apology for the Christian Religion*, but died at the age of thirty-nine, a death so early that he could only bequeath to the world a shoebox stuffed with various notes, jottings, and isolated fragments. But so powerful was this almost random gathering of *disjecta membra* that the posthumously published book was immediately recognized for the great work it is. For that reason, I have always felt that, when introducing Pascal, the briefer the better. Douglas Groothuis has written a fine introduction to Pascal under one hundred pages and he succeeds admirably in covering all facets of Pascal's achievement. Pascal once said that the main reason most people don't become Christian is that they find it so hard to stay in a room alone for any length of time. An hour or so alone with this fine introduction may not turn readers into Christians, but it should motivate them to consult Pascal's texts directly—a consultation that for many has led to conversion, and reconversion.

— *Edward T. Oakes, S.J.*

Ascension and Ecclesia. By Douglas Farrow. *Eerdmans. 340 pp. $35.*

This is a weighty and wonderful piece of work. That it is weighty is indicated by the subtitle, "On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology." It should be packaged with the label, "Some theological training required." That it is wonderful is experienced in the reading of an argument that begins with the observation that most Christians are somewhat embarrassed by the question, "But where did Jesus go?" Embarrassment leads to reticence or evasion in preaching about the Ascension. It was not always so, and Farrow, who teaches theology at McGill University, lifts up the second century Irenaeus as a model of bold and faithful thinking about the significance of the Ascension. Through the prism of the Ascension and the truths that it entails, Farrow engages almost the entire history of Christian theology and is particularly insightful in his treatment of Schleiermacher and the liberal tradition, which Karl Barth so vigorously, but with limited success, attempted to counter. Farrow also casts in a fresh way the sixteenth-century disputes, between Protestants and Catholics and among Protestants, over the nature of the "pure absence" or "pure presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, and makes connections with the ways in which those disputes continue in different guise in contemporary arguments about language, meaning, and what is real. *Ascension and Ecclesia* is learned, complex, gracefully written, and a great intellectual workout. Most important, it challenges us to think more deeply and clearly about the Ascension promise of the angel that the one who will return is "this same Jesus."

Clerical Error: A True Story. By Robert Blair Kaiser. *Continuum. 293 pp. $28.95.*

This memoir makes for painful reading, much like watching a drunk stagger across a busy freeway and wondering whether he'll make it to the other side. A former Jesuit scholastic, Kaiser reported the Second Vatican Council for *Time* magazine and has since freelanced in Rome, writing a stream of articles and books in sustained and angry protest against what he views as the oppressive and antiquated ways of a Church that, as he says again and again, has refused to follow his example in growing up. The villain in his jagged story line is Malachi Martin, a former Jesuit priest, womanizer, and legendary fabulist who broke up Kaiser's marriage, in addition to several others. There are moments of humor, usually unintended, in the author's depiction of prominent liberals who played a part in the Council and gathered regularly at Kaiser's Sunday evening salon. The praise bestowed on his achievements, and the envy of others, are amply treated. The book ends with Mr. Kaiser, wobbling but upright in the middle of life's freeway, still raging and shaking his fist at the oncoming cars, although it is now late at night and the traffic has slowed.

Churchill: Visionary, Statesman, Historian. By John Lukacs. *Yale University Press. 202 pp. $21.95.*

Not a biography but a group of evaluative essays in which the distinguished historian John Lukacs engages the judgments, both positive and negative, made of Churchill during the almost half century since his death in 1965. In the last chapter, a memoir of his attendance at Churchill's funeral, he calls him "my spiritual father," a tribute to be understood in light of Lukacs' youth in Europe when, in 1940, the Third Reich was triumphant everywhere and, it seemed, for farther into the future than anyone could see. Then it was that the lonely and defiant roar of Churchill gave birth to hope. Once again, Lukacs is critical of "conservatives" and "neoconservatives" (his quotes) who were ideologically obsessed with communism and missed the larger historical drama discerned by Churchill, and by Lukacs. That is less than persuasive,

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but the book is nonetheless an engaging appreciation of one of the greatest, and certainly one of the most consequential, lives of the twentieth century.

AMCHURCH COMES OUT: THE U.S. BISHOPS, PEDOPHILE SCANDALS, AND THE HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA. By PAUL LIKOUDIS. *Roman Catholic Faithful (Petersburg, Illinois). 260 pp. $24.95.*

Likoudis has been reporting on Catholic sex scandals for the *Wanderer* for more than a decade, and this book brings together much useful, if deeply depressing, information about the malfeasance of priests and bishops. Regrettably, his account is driven by his own agenda, relies on conspiracy theories that are sometimes farfetched, is prone to crediting second- and third-hand gossip, and violates both good journalism and the Eighth Commandment in order to advance the thesis that the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago directed a vast and hugely successful master plan to "homosexualize" the Catholic Church in America. 'Tis a pity, for patterns of corruption in the Church, including sexual corruption, are all too real and deserve a better book than this. A much better book.

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LOVE TAKING SHAPE: SERMONS ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. By GILBERT MEILAENDER. *Eerdmans. 143 pp. $15 paper.*

There was a time when books of sermons were best-sellers. No more. Maybe because preaching is no longer taken so seriously, which is maybe because most preachers do not attend to the craft of their art. Gilbert Meilaender, a regular contributor to these pages, is an exemplary exception. These sermons turn on the final virtue, which is love, as it is lived out in life in the ordinary. Preachers should buy the book and emulate its homiletical quality, but they should not preach these sermons from the pulpit, since some in the congregation may have read them for their devotional quality.

MEDIEVAL ESSAYS. By CHRISTOPHER DAWSON. *Catholic University of America Press. 240 pp. $24.95 paper.*

Count it a blessing that the works of Christopher Dawson are now being reissued on a regular basis. Dawson, who died in 1970, wrote with a grace of style, breadth of knowledge, and courage to generalize in defense of the proposition that there is such a thing as Christian civilization, and that we cannot understand our modern moment apart from Christendom. The present essays deal with the last days of the Roman Empire, the reasons for the decline of Byzantium, the complications of Christian-Jewish relations in fifteenth-century Spain, and why the entanglements of natural science, philosophy, and theology were cast in the arguments that continue to our day. Dawson is among the most sure cures for the disease of historical amnesia.

JAMES BURNHAM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD: A LIFE. By DANIEL KELLY. *ISI. 475 pp. $29.95.*

Starting out as a New York aristocrat of conventionally leftist (in his case Trotskyite) views, Burnham gained wide attention with his 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution*, which was understood to have invoked a pox upon both communism and the free world. His matured views were mostly articulated in the later years with *National Review*, and, dying in 1987, he did not live to see the end of the Soviet communism against which he had so vigorously battled. Kelly's is a deserved tribute to a major figure in the history of American conservatism.

NICENE CHRISTIANITY: THE FUTURE FOR A NEW ECUMENISM. Edited by CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ. *Brazos. 250 pp. $18.99 paper.*

What is meant when a Christian is said to be "orthodox"? Some answer that such a Christian stands in the Great Tradition. This book intends to specify more precisely by speaking of Nicene Christianity, and proposes that such orthodoxy is the basis of a new ecumenism that can and should replace an older ecumenism too often marked by departures from orthodoxy. The essays are by Protestant (both evangelical and oldline), Catholic, and Orthodox theologians, including Carl E. Braaten, Augustine DiNoia, Douglas Farrow, Robert Jenson, Susan Wood, and David S. Yeago. Theological meat.

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Civilizing Sex: On Chastity and the Common Good. By Patrick Riley. *T&T Clark. 250 pp. $28.95.*

An erudite romp through history, philosophy, and cultural criticism in the service of demonstrating what very much needs to be demonstrated, namely, that sex is not a private matter but a civilizational force of enormous social consequences, and that chastity, within and outside marriage, is a great communal as well as personal good. In the tradition of George Gilder's *Sexual Suicide*, but from a perspective more fully formed by the Judeo-Christian moral tradition.

Three Approaches to Abortion. By Peter Kreeft. *Ignatius. 133 pp. $9.95 paper.*

Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft is, among his many other attributes, a controversialist of rare accomplishment. The subtitle of this little book—written for pro-lifers, pro-choicers, and people who just wish the question would go away—is "a thoughtful and compassionate guide to today's most controversial issue." It is that. Kreeft fairly lays out the opposing arguments and concludes with a very believable "dialogue" between intelligent and caring opponents, leaving the final decision to the reader, who, as a consequence of reading this book, will be in a better position to make that decision.

Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition. By Christopher Kaczor. *Catholic University of America Press. 228 pp. $49.95.*

An instructive critique of proportionalism in Catholic ethics. Against those who insist that it represents a recovery of Thomistic moral reasoning or an outgrowth of the "spirit of Vatican II," the author convincingly argues that proportionalism reflects and amplifies the peculiar theoretical weaknesses of the neo-scholasticism that dominated the intellectual life of the Church prior to Vatican II.

Faith, Scholarship, and Culture in the 21st Century. Edited by Alice Ramos and Marie I. George. *Catholic University of America Press. 331 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Proceedings of the American Maritain Association, with wide-ranging essays on faith and reason, faith and science, the renewal of higher education, and Christian (and specifically Catholic) engagement with the culture.

Going Public: Christian Responsibility in a Divided America. By Lawrence E. Adams. *Brazos. 192 pp. $18.99 paper.*

A fair-minded and sobering survey of what contemporary thinkers make of the troubled role of religion in the public square. The author's own view of that role is that it is fragmented, incoherent, and in decline, forcing us to rely ever more firmly on the Lord of history whose purposes we cannot clearly discern. That firm reliance will be evident most of all in local communities of faith that can be, just as Jesus said, the salt of the earth.

Who Is Christ for Us? By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Fortress. 87 pp. $6 paper.*

Lectures from 1933 by the German Lutheran theologian and martyr who continues, with good reason, to grip the imagination of Christians prepared to undertake what the title of one of his better-known books calls "the cost of discipleship." These lectures are a way into the mind and soul of the young theologian on his way to the ultimate consequence of his faith.

The New Encyclopedia of Islam. By Cyril Glasse. *Rowman & Littlefield. 534 pp. $89.95.*

Concise, straightforward, and just the thing for which many in the West have been looking since September 11, 2001. A fine reference, with the added attraction of being handsomely illustrated (hence the hefty price tag).

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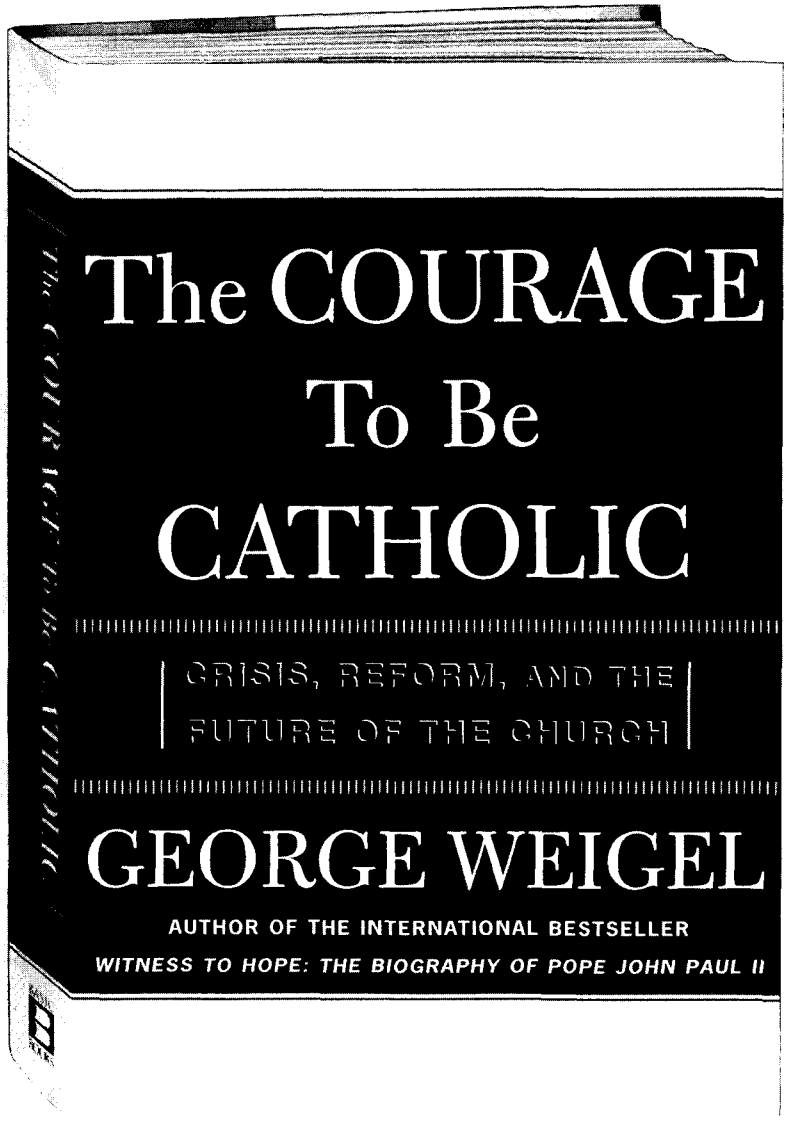
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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Mr. Wills for the Prosecution

by our court reporter

In the dock are Pope John Paul II and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. If they get a conviction, it is possible, but not certain, that the prosecution will go after a long list of indicted coconspirators. The charges are very serious: disturbing the peace, breach of contract, and, most grave, insurrection against the rightful sovereignty of the People of God. The claim is that the defendants are guilty of having attempted nothing less than a coup. Few trials in recent memory have attracted the enormous public interest surrounding *People of God v. Wojtyla and Ratzinger.* The prosecution has retained Mr. Garry Wills—adjunct professor of history at Northwestern University and authority on all things Catholic for the *New York Review of Books*—as lead counsel. It is in many ways a shrewd choice. Wills has a reputation for being quick of tongue and quick of wit, with a rapid delivery of facts and judgments that impresses, sometimes at the risk of intimidating, the less educated.

Mr. Wills reportedly caught the prosecution's attention when he published two years ago *Papal Sin*, a book that immediately reached the best seller lists. Now his very long 366-page closing argument for the trial has been leaked in advance and published under the title *Why I Am a Catholic.* Sources close to the prosecution say that Mr. Wills collaborated in the leak and chose the title himself. If true, it was an astute move. In his closing argument, Wills repeatedly refers to the critics of *Papal Sin* who accused him of being no true Catholic, or even an enemy of the Church. Knowing that much of his argument could be mistaken for the familiar anti-Catholic, and especially anti-papal, polemic that has been standard fare since the sixteenth century, he takes care in his closing argument to try to establish his Catholic bona fides. The bottom line, so to speak, is that he is certainly more Catholic than the Pope. Whether he succeeds or not in making that case is a question for the defense to explore and the jury to judge. My job is simply to report.

I have read some of the scholarly critiques of *Papal Sin*, and people who should know say they are pretty devastating. There is, for instance, the distinguished Professor Paul J. Griffiths in the Summer 2001 issue of *Logos.* He points out that Wills' book-length attack on what he alleges is "systemic" and "structural" papal mendacity is itself written in the service of mendacity. There Wills wrote: "My book is a tribute, in part, to the honesty that has led so many priests to keep silent under the burden of deceptiveness called for by their superiors—and it is a plea that the weight be removed." Prof. Griffiths comments: "It seems that the honesty Wills mentions here is the refusal by priests and bishops to teach (or even mention) a goodly proportion of what the Magisterium, both ordinary and extraordinary, asks them to teach. By Wills' own standards, such an act is an instance of *mendacium* if it is intended to deceive the faithful about what the Magisterium teaches or about what the priest or bishop in question thinks of it. Commending such an act—offering tribute to it, writing a book to comfort those who engage in it—is, to say the least, an Orwellian move for one whose professed devotion is to the truth-tellers of the Church."

Griffiths claims that *Papal Sin* is a diatribe presented under the mask of a scholarly treatise, which is itself deceptive. Moreover, Wills bases his argument on St. Augustine's definition of lying, which, says Griffiths,

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Wills misrepresents. Augustine says, "A lie is a false signification (*falsa significatio*) coupled with a desire to deceive (*fallendi voluntas*)." While both elements are essential to Augustine's understanding of *mendacium*, of lying, Wills employs only the second, says Griffiths. Perhaps he does so because he, like so many contemporary academics, is uneasy, as Augustine was not, with speaking about what is false or true without putting those words in quotation marks. Griffiths claims that Wills is either ignorant of Augustine's definition—which seems implausible, since Wills quotes the very text in which it appears—or is again being mendacious.

Truth Is What Succeeds

Other scholars claim to find numerous errors of fact and misrepresentations in *Papal Sin*, and maybe they are right. But, with due respect to their erudition, it seems to me they miss the point. In *Papal Sin*, and now in *Why I Am a Catholic*, Mr. Wills is making the case for the prosecution. His success or failure is determined by the outcome of the trial. As the great Oliver Wendell Holmes taught, truth or falsehood in the law is defined by outcomes. Put differently, law is whatever the court decides; questions of truth and falsehood have nothing to do with it. The scholarly critiques of Wills, however devastating, are in this instance quite irrelevant. His scholarship, however inadequate, is in the service of the prosecution and must be judged in terms of success or failure.

Why I Am a Catholic is a forceful closing argument. Recognizing that some of the jury may share the widespread admiration for John Paul II, Mr. Wills has a kind word or two for him; acknowledging, for instance, that he is in some respects an effective leader, although in a woefully wrong cause. He is downright poisonous, however, in his treatment of Cardinal Ratzinger, whom he treats with utter disdain. I wonder if some of the jurors may be put off by that. However that may be, if they get a conviction, I suspect that at the sentence hearing the prosecution may offer some mitigating words in the case of Wojtyla. Ratzinger can expect no mercy.

The book that contains the closing argument for the prosecution is really three smaller books. The first is an autobiographical reflection on being born and reared a Catholic, and, as I say, is intended to answer critics of *Papal Sin* and his numerous other writings who say Wills is really not a Catholic, or, given what he believes, should not be a Catholic. It may be a mistake for him to be so prickly and thin-skinned in reacting to his critics, but maybe it will work with the jury. He casts himself as the courageous, thoughtful, truth-telling "Vatican II Catholic" who is a victim of ignorant traditionalists and authoritarian ecclesiastics. Playing the victim card has its risks, as Mr. Wills undoubtedly knows, but it can be effective. In any event, most of this first part recycles what Mr. Wills has written in "Memories of a Catholic Boyhood" and other places. The genre is the familiar one of "once a Catholic, always a Catholic." While being careful not to offend ecumenical sensibilities, Mr. Wills says that, although one might be a member of some other church, such as the Episcopal, Lutheran, or Orthodox, which are somewhat closer to Catholicism than most, it would not be quite the same. The search for a perfect church is futile, he observes, and so one remains a Catholic. "We flawed believers live with our flawed fellow believers, even with flawed brothers like the Pope." As we shall see, however, the Pope is not simply one more flawed brother.

The second part of the document is basically a somewhat toned down reprise of *Papal Sin*'s ramble through two thousand years of history, demonstrating, in Mr. Wills' depiction, the nefarious doings of the papacy. That it is a repeat of what he has written before is not said in criticism. A good prosecutor uses and reuses what he thinks is his best material. I will return to Mr. Wills' historical indictment, but first a word about the specific charges against Wojtyla and Ratzinger, as set forth toward the end of this second part of the book. After the Council, says Wills, Paul VI was a kind of "Hamlet" who lamented that "the times are out of joint" and cursed the fate "that ever I was born to set them right." "Paul VI seemed to yearn back, beyond the intervening Council, to a more settled time, a kind of blissful status quo ante." Paul VI was sadly incompetent, but it is very different with Wojtyla. "John Paul was ready to *take* people back there. O blessed times, when *he* was born to set them right!" As for his codefendant, "Although Ratzinger cannot openly reject an ecumenical council of the Church, his latter-day program amounts to covert repudiation of it on all its major points."

I expect the defense will point out the obvious: that both Wojtyla, as a very influential cardinal archbishop, and Ratzinger, as a leading *peritus*, were actually participant in the Council; they may be expected to understand its meaning, and have consistently affirmed its intentions, which they claim to be advancing. At least in the case of Ratzinger, Mr. Wills is ready for that objection. His answer, which he apparently considers decisive, is that Ratzinger has changed his mind. He was once a liberal and then became a conservative, whereas the younger Mr. Wills was once a conservative and then became a liberal. Wills no doubt hopes that most jurors will share his assumption that the former change is deeply suspect, while the latter is evidence of commendable growth.

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An Attempted Coup

Then we come to the full specificity and gravity of the charges against the defendants. The great achievement of Vatican II, according to Wills, is that it dismantled the authority of the hierarchy and located sovereignty in "the people of God." This is the Settlement of Vatican II that the defendants have been attempting to upset. This is sedition, insurrection, and treason; we are speaking here of capital crimes. Mr. Wills puts it this way: "In fact, the Vatican has attempted a coup, a takeover of the conciliar church it does not like. I use the term 'coup' advisedly." He notes that in the Church, according to the Settlement of Vatican II, the "center of authority is the Spirit, diffused through the people of God." Yet John Paul and Ratzinger continue to speak of "the Church" teaching this or that, including items that Mr. Wills dismisses as "bizarre," "simply silly," or "complete nonsense," such as the wrongness of contraception, the merits of priestly celibacy, opposition to ordaining women and gays, and the need for laws protecting the unborn. On these and other questions, says Mr. Wills, the governing authority in the Church—i.e., the people of God—does not agree with the defendants. Their efforts are deserving of the harshest judgment. "This is a usurpation of authority," declares Mr. Wills. "It is an attempt to overthrow the people of God." And, not incidentally, it is a sin against the Holy Spirit who is "diffused through the people of God."

No doubt the defense will point out that neither in his text nor his many footnotes does Mr. Wills refer to any of the major documents or actions demonstrating that this pontificate intends to be vigorously advancing the vision of Vatican II. Nowhere is there a mention of, for instance, major encyclicals such as *Centesimus Annus*, on the moral foundations of liberal democracy, or of *Ut Unum Sint*, on the Church's irrevocable commitment to Christian unity, or of *Fides et Ratio*, on the necessity of a reasoned faith and reason's faithfulness to truth. Nowhere is there reference to scholarly works such as George Weigel's *Witness to Hope*, showing the ways in which this pontificate is carrying forward the mandate of Vatican II. But, assuming that he is familiar with that very extensive literature, why should Mr. Wills refer to it? Those who criticize him on this score fail to understand his task as prosecutor. Why should he do the work of the defense? It is not as though his job is to offer a balanced or impartial or scholarly account. Whether Mr. Wills should press his case in such a relentlessly mean-spirited manner is a different question. The tone of superiority, the sustained sneer, the derisive asides in referring to those who disagree, may put off some jurors. On the other hand, says an experienced court watcher, "people do not expect a prosecutor to be fair-minded."

Defending the Status Quo

And it must be admitted that Mr. Wills is not always heavy-handed. There is, for instance, a subtlety that may elude some jurors, and I wonder if Mr. Wills is not being just a bit too subtle on this point. He repeatedly says that the defendants are trying to return the Church to the status quo ante. To which, as I say, the defense in its concluding statement will almost certainly contend that the defendants have been, precisely on the basis of Vatican II, trying to better equip the Church for the challenges of the future. What might easily be missed here is the status, so to speak, of the status quo. The status quo, according to Mr. Wills, is the Settlement of Vatican II, the transfer of authority to the sovereign people of God—in a word, "the post-Vatican II Church." As prosecutor of those who challenge the status quo, Mr. Wills is of course the defender of the status quo. Or at least what he depicts as the status quo. Perhaps he needs to be very subtle on this point since liberals—and he is very much a liberal—do not ordinarily like to be described as defenders of the status quo. At the same time, I expect he is counting on the possibility that most jurors like the status quo of the "post-Vatican II Church" as much as he does.

The reason I think that Mr. Wills, if he gets a conviction, will ask for a mitigated or even suspended sentence for John Paul is that he wants to view the Pope not simply as a weaker brother but, in some sense, as a father. The best way to help the Pope, says Wills, is to oppose him. At one point he writes, "We do not leave a father whenever he proves wrong on something. That is when he needs us. The greatest service one can do for John Paul is to continue baffling his attempted coup." He must be stopped in his efforts to change the Church, to create "a different church from the one that exists." The post-Vatican II Church that exists—and Mr. Wills cites opinion polls to support his argument here—disagrees with the Pope on questions of sexual morality, the ordination of women, and other controverted questions. "Furthermore, the number of Catholics having abortions is the same as the number of non-Catholics. . . . The people disagreeing with the Vatican do not consider themselves disloyal or disobedient. They do not feel that they are 'bad Catholics.' They continue to go to church and to take communion, without supposing that they must confess their actions or attitudes as sinful. . . . They do not reject authority in general, but recognize an authority at odds, on some points, with the Pope. What is the authority?"

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The last question goes to the heart of what is meant by the post-Vatican II Church. Mr. Wills notes with satisfaction that, after the orchestrated rejection of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 (the encyclical proposing Paul VI's "simply silly" ideas on human sexuality), theologians have been free to say whatever they want. "In fact," he writes, "theologians are not the only ones who now claim the right to think freely. Laypeople, too, feel empowered to form their own opinions and conduct their affairs guided by their conscience—which, again, the Council said should be the norm." Here, whether or not one agrees with Mr. Wills, one must admire his audacity. He immediately follows that statement with this: "What Newman wrote of them in 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine' has been vindicated." He is taking the risk that the jurors do not know, as he undoubtedly knows very well, that in John Henry Newman's syllabus of the errors of liberalism (a syllabus of errors more severe than the one drawn up by Pius IX, which Wills so gleefully excoriates), no error is greater than that of "private judgment" in matters of faith and morals.

Newman affirmed, of course, traditional Catholic teaching that one must always act in accord with conscience, insisting also on the other part of that teaching, that it is one's duty in conscience to have a conscience formed in accord with truth. The source of truth, in turn, is right reason, and revelation as authoritatively expressed in the teaching of the Church. But, as we have seen, for Mr. Wills the revolution of Vatican II means that "the teaching of the Church" is nothing more, nor less, than the opinions formed by "the people of God"—i.e., the private judgments of people who say they are Catholics, which judgments are accessible by opinion polls. The breathtaking audacity of Mr. Wills is to attempt to recruit Cardinal Newman in support of his view that matters of faith and morals are to be determined by private judgment. I don't know if he will succeed in this, but one must give him credit for the boldness of the effort.

I have no idea whether Mr. Wills really believes what he is arguing. The question is whether it will work with the jurors, remembering that truth and falsehood in law is measured by outcomes. Perhaps it will work, since people of our time very much like being told that they should think for themselves, and are attached to the conceit that they do. In any event, my business is simply to report and analyze, not to judge the merits of Mr. Wills' arguments. I am impressed by his strategy of boldly arguing from authority against authority. It may be too clever by half (in which case it is the business of the defense to exploit the weaknesses), but Mr. Wills repeatedly invokes authorities in defense of the positions that the same authorities explicitly reject. Call it turning things on their head, or call it a canny tactic of co-optation, it is impressive.

A Child of His Times

The authorities most cited by Mr. Wills and, he says, most admired by him are St. Augustine, John Henry Newman, and G. K. Chesterton. We have seen what some scholars make of his use of Augustine, and have considered Newman on the evils of private judgment. (More on Newman later.) In the first part of the book on his Catholic boyhood, and in the third part in which he presents his personal belief system—in both of which he attempts to establish for the jurors his Catholic bona fides—he has interesting, and sometimes moving, things to say about Chesterton's influence on his thought. But, for purposes of the trial, Chesterton is invoked to most surprising ends.

Chesterton said that he is grateful to Catholicism for saving him from that most degrading state of being a child of his times. In his brief, Mr. Wills is making the argument that his rightness, and the rightness of those in the "post-Vatican II Church," is demonstrated precisely by their being children of their times. The charge against the defendants is that they are not. John Paul, Wills charges, thinks the times are out of joint. He is obsessed with canonizing saints and encouraging what Wills calls popular "superstitions" such as Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe. (With respect to such matters, one notes in passing, the faithful who share the Pope's beliefs and practices are apparently not among those who are to be consulted.) Moreover, John Paul is incessantly referring to the "martyrs" under communism and Nazism, and warning against what he irresponsibly calls a "culture of death" with respect to abortion, euthanasia, and other disputed questions. In short, John Paul urges the Church to be countercultural, thus subverting the culture of secular democracy and freedom of choice which Mr. Wills has been retained to defend. As he repeatedly says, it is not the Church that is out of step with John Paul but John Paul who is out of step with the Church. His subversive activity is the very reason for *People of God v. Wojtyla and Ratzinger.*

Ratzinger is even worse than John Paul. He is not only critical of the times but regularly criticizes the intellectual defenders of the spirit of the times. As one of those defenders, Mr. Wills takes most particular umbrage. He attributes to Ratzinger the view of Cardinal Heenan of England, "Those close to God are untroubled by the winds of academic controversy." To which Mr. Wills responds, "Obviously, then, those engaged in the academy must be far from God." There is a self-serving note of personal pique here, and I don't know how that will play with the jury. Some of

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them may not share Mr. Wills' assumption that their academic and intellectual betters who defend the cultural status quo necessarily know better than ordinary people or, for that matter, leaders such as John Paul and Ratzinger. But here, too, that is a risk that he is apparently ready to take.

Needless to say, Mr. Wills is contemptuously dismissive of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae,* the document urging that teachers of Catholic theology teach what the Church teaches. (It reminds him of "the McCarthyite hunt for Communists.") Not only is this a gross violation of academic freedom, but it is part and parcel of the Vatican's attempted "coup" against the Settlement of Vatican II which decreed that the people of God are free to believe and teach whatever they want to believe and teach, understanding that what they believe and teach is articulated by enlightened academics who, in step with the times, think for themselves.

At this point Mr. Wills' summation takes a turn that may be unnecessarily complicating. He asks, "Which interpretation of Vatican II is the valid one, that of the papacy or that of the people of God?" John Paul and Ratzinger can huff and puff all they want, but the latter interpretation has clearly prevailed, he answers. Although he is a "charismatic figure," John Paul's pontificate, measured by the coup he intended, "has been a failure—thank God." As for Ratzinger, he has become a bore and nobody is paying attention. "The people he attacks are not arguing with (or about) Vatican II. They are living Vatican II." There are unsubstantiated reports that some on the prosecution team are urging Mr. Wills to drop this part of his argument. If the threat of a coup has been so definitively turned back, if the defendants are no more than two disgruntled old men hopelessly attached to a lost cause, what is the point of the elaborate exercise that is *People of God v. Wojtyla and Ratzinger*? It seems a valid question. If Mr. Wills is right about their pathetic irrelevance, it would hardly seem worthwhile for a busy academic to bother writing books against them. The danger is past, and everybody should just get on with "living Vatican II." As I say, the reports are unsubstantiated, and we will have to await the summation to see if Mr. Wills retains this part of his argument.

Erastus Triumphant

Mr. Wills' summation is very long and composed of many parts that, on first reading, may not always fit together very well. Those who have examined it more carefully, however, think they can connect the dots. Father Richard John Neuhaus, for instance, says the Wills argument is marked by a thoroughgoing Erastianism (after Thomas Erastus, the sixteenth-century German-Swiss Protestant theologian). Erastianism is the doctrine that the state or nation should govern in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Mr. Wills does not use the term Erastianism, but the doctrine does seem to be regnant throughout his argument; it is the thread that ties together what otherwise may appear to be the many disjointed parts. He does not directly criticize the words of Jesus about not rendering to Caesar what belongs to God, but at every point of historical conflict between Caesar and the Church, the story is told in terms favorable to Caesar.

Fr. Neuhaus, who is critical of Erastianism, says it is important to keep in mind that at the center of Mr. Wills' argument is the contention that the papacy does not represent the Church. The original "papal sin" is the pretense to the contrary. The great battles of history that are usually depicted as conflicts between Church and state are, in this reading, conflicts between the state (or the culture, or the dominant social institutions) and the papacy. The papacy is forever trying to claim, in the name of Christ and the Church, an illegitimate sovereignty within, and even over, the sovereignty of the social order. In other words, in the view of Mr. Wills, it is Caesar who is protecting not only the things of the secular order but also of the spiritual order against attempted usurpation by the papacy or anyone else who would suggest a possible conflict between what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar. There is only one sovereignty and that is the sovereignty of Caesar—whether exercised by emperors, kings, revolutionary regimes, or by public opinion in a liberal democracy. In Mr. Wills' Erastian construal of history, the attempted usurpations go far back, with John Paul's and Ratzinger's effort being but the last gasp of protest against the new order that should have been settled once and for all by Vatican II.

Consider, for instance, the sixth-century Pope Gelasius. Mr. Wills says the emperor tried to reach a reasonable accommodation with him, but Gelasius responded with a "stunning" letter famously asserting, "Two there are, my august emperor, by which the world is governed as by sovereigns: the consecrated authority of bishops and the power of princes." Fr. John Courtney Murray, who played a leading role in Vatican II's declaration on religious freedom, called the letter of Gelasius the "magna carta" of religious freedom that set forth the principle of dual sovereignty for the right ordering of the things of Caesar and the things of God. Despite the fact that Mr. Wills later portrays Fr. Murray as one of his heroes, he views the claims of Gelasius as emblematic of the kind of papal power grab that was supposed to have been ended by Vatican II.

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And so the story continues. In the eleventh century Investiture Controversy, it is Henry IV who seeks a reasonable accommodation and Pope Gregory VII who is consumed by an unbridled lust for power and is, despite Henry's temporary humiliation at Canossa, finally and justly defeated. Much the same scenario is played out even when it comes to the French Revolution. There is no mention of the Great Terror. (Mr. Wills reserves the phrase "Reign of Terror" for the title of his chapter relating the sufferings of theologians in the first half of the twentieth century under the papal repression of errors associated with modernism.) About the French Revolution we are told: "The revolutionary regime confiscated the Church's extensive properties in order to stave off national bankruptcy. In compensation, the clergy were guaranteed generous wages, more for the priests than they were used to, drastically less for bishops—which struck some priests as just about right." No guillotine, no Madame Lafarge, no Religion of Atheism, no *Dialogue of the Carmelites* here. Mr. Wills proposes an audaciously revisionist version of Christian history, which some will no doubt find refreshing and others simply implausible.

What happened in sixteenth-century England provides a case in point. To put it briefly, Henry VIII was right and Pope Clement VII was wrong. The Pope should have granted the annulment for which Henry asked. Mr. Wills says, "These favors to kings in need of heirs may have been corrupt, but they were common." That Henry later declared himself the supreme head of the Church in England, asserting that the Church is "part of the body politic" and the king is head of the body, seems quite reasonable, according to Mr. Wills. Later, when Elizabeth I took the throne, she was nothing if not reasonable. She proposed what became known as the Elizabethan Settlement. But as with all the earlier settlements and, much later, with the Settlement of Vatican II, the papacy was uncooperative. "She sought a *via media* between Catholic and Anglican tenets and worship while suppressing dissenters like the Puritans," Wills says. "But the popes (among others) made this impossible." First there was "the mad Paul IV," and then the equally intransigent Paul V, both of whom stubbornly insisted that the Church in England must be in communion with Rome, with and under Peter.

Those whom Catholics have traditionally revered as "the English martyrs"—John Fisher, Thomas More, Edmund Campion, et al.—were, says Mr. Wills, rightly condemned as traitors and got what they deserved. Campion and the other Jesuits claimed that theirs was a purely spiritual mission in England, but that is false. "Insofar as they were recalling people to Rome, it was to an authority that told Catholics they should disobey their queen. That sounds like treason in anyone's language, and the Jesuits died a traitor's death." Again, the Erastian doctrine is that there can be but one sovereignty. After all these centuries the papacy, represented by the defendants in the dock, has still not made its peace with that. Rome should have accepted the *via media* offered by Elizabeth. As we have seen, throughout his brief Mr. Wills invokes John Henry Newman in support of his argument. Newman spent a good deal of his life explaining why a *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism is an impossibility—theologically, historically, and politically. That is why he became a Catholic.

Mr. Wills faces a daunting task in persuading the jurors that it is the authentically Catholic position to hold that Henry VIII was right, the English martyrs were justly executed for treason, and John Henry Newman should have remained an Anglican. It is not, to put it delicately, what anyone has meant by the Catholic view of these matters over the last half millennium. Mr. Wills must know that this will not be an easy sell. Perhaps here, too, his colleagues on the prosecution side will urge him to modify his argument. On the other hand, sources close to Mr. Wills say he is determined to go all the way in trying to settle once and for all that the papacy has been the enemy of the Church—meaning the people of God—and that it will be again if the defendants are allowed to get away with their attempted coup.

It will not escape the attention of jurors with a modicum of historical awareness that Mr. Wills makes only passing reference to the First Vatican Council. Its definition of papal infallibility in 1870 is mentioned, and he has much to say about John Paul II's alleged abuse of the doctrine of infallibility, but the significance of Vatican I with respect to earthly powers receives no attention. With the providential loss of the papal states, and against the rivalries and pressures of nations and princes that for centuries vied to control the papacy, the papacy at Vatican Council I demonstrated its ability to convoke a genuinely transnational assembly that secured the right and ability of the Church to govern itself (*libertas ecclesiae*). It is noteworthy that, after skipping over Vatican Council I, Mr. Wills' history of the papacy takes a very different turn. No longer is the story that of worldly papal challenges to the sovereignty of Caesar. From here on, the papal story is entirely about its putative oppression (a "Reign of Terror") of dissident theologians and other advanced thinkers who, says Mr. Wills, were finally vindicated by Vatican II. Caesar is still in play. But he is now not the prince or the nation-state. Rather, he is embodied and his sovereignty is exercised within the Church by theologians and intellectuals speaking for the people of God. The

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papacy is still up to its old power-grabbing games, but now against a new Caesar.

What the Creed Means to Me

The third part of *Why I Am a Catholic* is composed of material that Mr. Wills has not published before. It is a more personal statement of what he believes and is intended to explain why, despite all, he really is a Catholic. He begins, perhaps counterintuitively, with the typically Protestant assertion that what matters in being a Christian is one's personal belief and not one's connection with, never mind obedience to, a specific community with its distinctive institutions. He says he is somewhat reticent in writing so personally, and in his reflections on the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father he is certainly not trying to impose his beliefs on others. "I am about to give my own reasons for believing the creed. . . . What is at issue, for the moment, is not the truth of the creed but the truth of my own profession of it. I shall try to explain what the creed means to me," and so forth.

Although some of his critics may deny it, any fair-minded person will recognize that there is much that is insightful, even moving, in this reflection offered in the service of establishing for the jury his bona fides as a Catholic. Establishing such bona fides is, as I said at the outset, crucial. Without that, the defense will have a field day in depicting his entire argument as little more than a latter-day eruption of old-fashioned anti-Catholicism. This final section leaves no doubt that Mr. Wills is a Christian; whether he is a Catholic Christian will, almost certainly, be sharply questioned by the defense. I am told that the prosecution expects that he will be challenged on the article "I believe in the holy catholic Church," since there is nothing he says there that is not said by many non-Catholics. A nice touch that will no doubt impress some is that Mr. Wills emphasizes that he prays the rosary. What he says, or does not say, about the Real Presence in the Eucharist is of interest. Faith in the "transubstantiation" of the elements is ordinarily taken as a distinctive mark of Catholicism. Mr. Wills writes, "The Eucharist was rightly said not to be merely 'commemorative' (though its positive sense was couched in an Aristotelian definition of substance, as if orthodoxy depended on being an Aristotelian)." We are not told what his own very personal view of the Real Presence might be. He says he does not deny the perpetual virginity of Mary, although it has nothing to do with biology, as in virginity. As for the infallibly defined dogma of the assumption of Mary, he says it certainly cannot refer to her actual body, quoting St. Paul, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the reign of God." Whatever the dogma claims for Mary, "the same must be said of all who die in the Lord." Catholics may protest that that is not what the Church teaches, but that brings us back full circle to the basic argument over the meaning of "Church." The Church is the people of God, Mr. Wills is a member of the people of God, and that is what Mr. Wills says the assumption means. Q.E.D.

Papacy Without Power

In this last part of his summation, the jurors may be reassured, and perhaps somewhat surprised, by Mr. Wills' frequent mention of the importance of the "Petrine ministry" as a symbol, even a sacrament, of unity. I expect, however, that the defense will point out that his Petrine ministry seems to be unrelated to the institution and actual history of the papacy. Or, if it does include the papacy, it is a papacy without popes. The popes, by Mr. Wills' account, have been agents of disunity, corruption, and authoritarian repression—with the honorable exception of John XXIII, who convoked a council to transfer the authority of the pope and what used to be called the "Magisterium of the Church" to the people of God who, in fact, are the Church. If the defense team are on their toes, they might know a little about the ongoing theological dialogues in which Anglicans and Lutherans are prepared to be more definite about the connection between the Petrine ministry and the papacy than is Mr. Wills, thereby suggesting that he could be an Anglican or Lutheran, if he could bring himself somewhat closer to the Catholic position. But again, my job is not to tell the defense how to conduct its case.

What should come through clearly is that the defendants are not on trial because they are bad men—although Mr. Wills leaves no doubt that he thinks Ratzinger is a bad man. They are on trial because they represent the evil of the papacy and are trying to restore its authority over the Church. This is what he means when he charges that they are guilty of attempting a coup. As he argued at length in the bill of indictment, *Papal Sin*, and repeats now in his summation, the papacy is inherently and systemically corrupt, repressive, and power hungry. That, we are given to understand, was the judgment of Vatican II, and Wojtyla and Ratzinger are now trying to reverse that judgment.

At points, however, Mr. Wills seems to obscure the clarity of his central argument. For example, he quotes Evelyn Waugh, who, when asked how he could be a Christian and still be such a mean fellow, answered, "Just think how much worse I would be if I were not a Christian." Wills writes, "In the same way, as bad as the papacy has been all through its history, just think how much worse things would have been without it." This,

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coming toward the end of his summation, will, I expect, be a surprise and puzzlement to the jurors. Everything that has gone before suggests the conclusion that things would have been much better if there had never been a papacy. Perhaps aware of the apparent contradiction, Mr. Wills explains that the great contribution of the papacy is that—despite itself, so to speak—it preserved the creed. He says, "The papacy did not formulate the creed containing these truths; but it has been essential in preserving them, while heretics 'selected' this or that item from the creed."

But will not the jurors unavoidably ask how the papacy preserved the creed if not by the exercise of a teaching authority that the prosecution says the papacy does not rightly possess? The earlier popes are condemned—with the honorable exception of John XXIII—and the defendants are in the dock precisely because they disagree with the prosecution on this key point. According to Mr. Wills, those who are "living Vatican II" claim the right to form their own opinions and act according to their own consciences in matters of faith and morals, tolerating no interference by the papacy or Magisterium. Are they not "selecting" what they want to believe, and therefore at least in danger of becoming heretics? Why was the papacy necessary to preserving the creed in the past but is not now? It seems a pity that Mr. Wills does not address these and other questions that are inevitably raised by his argument.

If I may be permitted a brief speculation, it appears he could come up with two possible answers to these puzzlements. He might pursue the line—which is implicit in his summation—that there is a great divide between faith and morals. The papacy can teach authoritatively on matters of faith (the creed) but not on matters of morals (contraception, homosexuality, the legal protection of the unborn, etc.). On the latter questions, the people who are "living Vatican II" are free to make up their own minds and act accordingly. This sharp distinction, even separation, between faith and morals is suggested by his basing his claim that he is a true Catholic, despite his rejection of the teaching of pope and Magisterium, on the fact that he accepts the creed, at least as he interprets it. The difficulty with this line of argument, of course, is that teaching on morals necessarily involves doctrinal and theological claims. Faith and morals cannot be so easily distinguished, never mind separated. The Church's moral doctrine is *doctrine*. The authority that teaches on the controverted questions that bother Mr. Wills is the same authority whose teaching, as he says, preserves the creed, the articles of which have been and continue to be much controverted.

An informed source close to the defense points out that, in fact, the Church's Magisterium does make distinctions in levels of authoritative teaching. Vatican II spoke of a "hierarchy of truths" and this pontificate has employed the image of "the structure of faith" in order to make clear that not every statement made by the Magisterium is *de fide*, or a matter of faith. These admittedly complex distinctions, however, are not addressed by Mr. Wills. His broadside is aimed at the papal presumption that it possesses the authority to teach in the name of the Church when, after Vatican II, it is understood that the only authority is "the Spirit diffused through the people of God." At the same time, and somewhat inexplicably, he says we should be grateful for the papacy because it preserves the creed.

I said there were two ways that Mr. Wills might address the puzzlements to which his summation leads. The second way might be to pursue a line somewhat similar to Francis Fukuyama's famous thesis about "the end of history." Papal teaching authority, however corrupted, was once necessary but is no longer. As for Fukuyama the triumph of liberal democracy marks the end of political history, so the history of the Church has reached its terminus in the people of God, having—to use a favored phrase of some contemporary theologians—"come of age." Vatican II was for Catholics a rite of passage to adulthood, and the attempted coup of the defendants is in their effort to force people back into childhood and dependence upon the putative authority of the papacy. The papacy—which is not simply the history of sinful popes but is itself, as he says, "a structure of sin"—may once have been needed but is no longer tolerable.

This "end of history" argument is implied at points but never made explicit by Mr. Wills. It would require making the case that Catholics today, or maybe people in general, are substantively, even ontologically, different from people in the past, and are no longer susceptible to falling into heresy by "selecting" this or that from the Church's teaching. In this view, contra Chesterton, we should be grateful to "the Vatican II Church" for conferring upon us that elevated state of being the children of our utterly singular times. But, although it is implicit at points in his summation, Mr. Wills does not develop in detail the "end of history" argument that might serve as one possible answer to the puzzlements mentioned above.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Mr. Wills, unlike many liberal Catholics, does not invest his hopes in "the next pope," nor does he call for a Vatican Council III to, as it is frequently said, "complete the business" of Vatican II. His argument, if I understand it correctly, is that there is no business for the Magisterium to complete. Put differently, Vatican II put the Magisterium out of business. The Erastian contention is carried through to the end. The papal sin is no

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longer in trying to usurp the sovereignty of Caesar as represented by princes and nation-states, although that, too, sometimes still happens. The papal sin that chiefly concerns Mr. Wills, however, the papal sin for which the defendants are in the dock, is the attempt to usurp the authority of the new Caesar, namely, the rule of establishment liberalism in the name of the sovereign people of God. That's the agreement, that's the deal, that's the Settlement of Vatican II. That's the status quo that Mr. Wills for the prosecution is determined to defend.

The case of *The People of God v. Wojtyla and Ratzinger* drags on and on. No date has been set for the final argument by the defense. A friend of the defendants tells me that the defense may rest its case without making a closing statement. Mr. Wills' 366-page summation, he says, is so incoherent, so riddled with errors, falsehoods, and contradictions that it is self-refuting. That is probably wishful thinking on the part of an admitted partisan. It assumes that the jurors possess a knowledge of history and Catholic doctrine, along with a taste for reasoned argument, that can hardly be taken for granted. An old court watcher observes, perhaps somewhat cynically, that few cases are lost by overestimating the ignorance of the jury. However the trial proceeds, Mr. Wills already has the satisfaction of knowing that *Why I Am a Catholic* is selling briskly in book form. Which perhaps suggests that the old court watcher is not so cynical after all.

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THE NEW MAN AT CANTERBURY

Dr. Rowan Williams is the new Archbishop of Canterbury, succeeding Dr. George Carey, and there is considerable dispute about whether this is good news, with sides formed along familiar lines. Dr. Williams has supported ordaining the homogenitally active, although, since being named to Canterbury, he says he will support the decision of the Lambeth conference against that course. He apparently sees no theological problem with having women bishops. Some non-Anglicans have a hard time understanding why the latter issue is such a big deal for Anglicans, since they already ordain women as priests. But it is said that women bishops will be the "last straw" for many Anglo-Catholics who will embark for Rome if and when that happens. Anglicanism, however, is the story of last straws beyond numbering.

Then there are those of a more Protestant bent who are accusing Williams of "idolatry" because in a recent book, *Praying with Icons of the Virgin*, he encourages devotion to the Mother of God. Williams, a former professor of theology at Oxford, has for the last two years been Archbishop of Wales. He speaks Welsh fluently and is the first Welshman to be elevated to Canterbury. In August he was inducted into the Welsh branch of the druids. The London *Times* reported, "As the sun rises over a circle of Pembrokeshire bluestones, the Archbishop of Wales will don a long white cloak while druids chant a prayer to the ancient god and goddess of the land." If he is an idolater, it has been observed, he is an equal opportunity idolater. Robyn Lewis, the Archdruid of Wales, defends Williams, explaining that the Welsh druids, as distinct from English groups, "are more a cultural association than a religious group." Much like the Church of England, some would say.

It is pointed out, however, that since the virtual abolition of abortion law in 1967, Williams has also been a member of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. "I know this will surprise some people who see me as a liberal," he has said, "but I am very worried about the abortion situation." In *Lost Icons* (2000) he wrote, "Reversion to a pre-1967 situation would only be attractive, even morally defensible, in the context of a massive reconstruction of attitudes to child care and nurture, to the professional lives of childbearing women, the availability of other forms of fertility control to women, and many other things besides." It would seem that Dr. Williams will not be advocating anything specific, such as the legal protection of unborn children, in the near future.

The *Tablet*, a London-based Catholic weekly, hails Dr. Williams' elevation under the heading "A Prophetic Appointment." The editor writes, "Catholics in Britain and elsewhere will welcome the new man at Canterbury, while waiting to see how he will build relations with them. Rowan Williams' concern hitherto has been more with Orthodoxy—a common trend among Anglican intellectuals, who profess to see in Orthodox ecclesiology a reflection of their own. But in Britain a reunited Church is impossible without Rome." The editor hopes that Williams will act on the theological advances coming out of the Anglican-RC dialogues. With Orthodoxy as much as with Rome, others have observed, obstacles to ecclesial reconciliation may be posed by issues such as women priests, the moral status of homosexuality, and, despite the latitudinarianism of the Archdruid of Wales, other gods and goddesses. The enthusiasm of the *Tablet* notwithstanding, it is possible that the "prophetic appointment" of Dr. Williams has added substantially

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to the list of questions to be addressed in ecumenical dialogue.

Robert Jenson of the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton examines Dr. Williams' book *On Christian Theology* in the Summer 2002 issue of the distinguished journal of theology *Pro Ecclesia.* He notes Williams offers a kind of meta-theology that is marked by a postmodernist "distrust of closure." (See my "The End of Endings," FT, August/September 2001, for an analysis of postmodernism's closure anxiety.) "According to Williams," Jenson writes, "we too readily treat dogmas and other theological propositions as *answers* to 'the essential questions'; whereas true theological thinking seeks instead to be brought into the vicinity of truth by opening and reopening these questions, by agitating the doubts and conflicts behind accepted answers. Williams wants to lead us along the shifting contours of actual fractured and multivalent religious and theological language, maintaining our consciousness of the variety and tenuousness of its relations to reality beyond it. In particular, he is concerned to enforce theology's function as *critique,* and especially as *self*-critique."

Jenson acknowledges that "we need to be led on such paths, and Williams is good at it," but he also has some problems with this approach. He wonders if "the bishop's fear of closure begins to seem far too obsessive to be truly helpful in the life of faith." After all, the confession to which teaching is supposed to lead us begins with "I believe . . . ," not with "I wonder about. . . ." Is it really the proper purpose of dogma and other theology, Jenson asks, "indefinitely to sustain puzzlement?" Thus with respect to the Incarnation, Williams says it is important to "keep the essential questions alive." This seems to puzzle Professor Jenson, who notes that the fathers at Chalcedon and other early councils "certainly *thought* they were *settling* certain essential questions." Of course, new questions are always arising, but the church fathers "did not suppose that the purpose of their formulations was to keep alive the debates that brought them to the meetings."

Jenson goes on to express his concern about the ways in which Williams represents a liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, often referred to as neo-Protestantism. He writes, "As a general prescription for theology now to be done, neo-Protestant principles surely come a bit late. Of course Anglican theology in general tends to be anachronistic in this way, having missed out on the uproar of the '20s and '30s [e.g., Karl Barth's battles with liberalism]. What is disappointing—at least to this reviewer—is that Rowan Williams turns out to be so typical." An Anglican colleague tells Jenson that Williams is proposing a "mediating" theology that is actually a defense of dogma and theology directed against the antitheological liberals who dominate the Church of England. If that is the case, Jenson concludes, we must hope that Rowan Williams will not "mediate away the store."

In fairness, one may suggest that Dr. Williams understands that the task of a bishop and that of an academic theologian are quite different. An academic may explore endlessly interesting theories, while a bishop is to teach the faith. There can, after all, be no worthy critique of faith without a faith to critique. In view of his support for disestablishment, Dr. Williams may even inherit from the monarch the title (originally bestowed by the pope) "defender of the faith." In candor, however, one must recognize that Dr. Williams has been a bishop since 1992, during which time his many writings and public statements provide slight evidence that he understands these different tasks. As Robert Jenson says, it can be a good thing "to keep the essential questions alive," and many people are determined to do that. But the considerable talents of the new Archbishop of Canterbury will not, we must hope, be devoted to keeping alive the inevitable question of whether the Anglican communion believes, teaches, and confesses much of anything. On that question, Dr. Williams should set aside his "distrust of closure" and lead in providing an unequivocal answer in the affirmative. Such a welcome turn could result in a fresh and bold articulation for our times of what the New Testament calls "the faith once delivered to the saints." Pray that Rowan Williams and the communion over which he now presides will surprise us and, in the process, be surprised by the answers that give form and direction to the questions that will not end until, in the words of St. Paul, we know even as we are known. It is the Christian answers that keep alive the questions. Without them, as we should have learned by now, the world will come up with deadly answers of its own.

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SCANDAL TIME: A PALPABLE CHANGE

There is, as of this writing, something of a lull in the storms of crisis that have this year shaken the foundations of the Catholic Church in this country. I offer here no more than an update on a few developments, fully expecting that more extended report and commentary will be required next month.

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To say that the foundations have been shaken is not hyperbole. It doesn't mean that the foundations are cracking, never mind collapsing, but they are under attack from some quarters. In talking with bishops, priests, and lay leaders, and in reading the pertinent commentaries, I am impressed by the deep, almost somber, sense of sobriety that now prevails. In "Scandal Time III" (August/September), I presented what was intended to be a severe critique of what the bishops did at their Dallas meeting in June. Some bishops thought my criticism too severe, and a good many lay people let me know in no uncertain terms that they think the bishops did not go far enough. "Better a hundred innocent priests be removed than that one guilty priest be retained. Due process be damned." That's a slight paraphrase of some of the messages I have received.

Priests, on the other hand, tend to be strongly supportive of the critique I offered. This does not surprise. After all, the bishops were the primary object of the criticism; the level of lay outrage about the abuses that caused the scandal can hardly be exaggerated; and priests believe that they are being scapegoated by the policies entailed in Dallas' mantra of "zero tolerance." Some of the approximately three hundred priests who have been peremptorily removed are fighting back, either in canonical appeals or through civil courts. It is reported that, in a few cases where bishops publicized unfounded charges, priests are suing for defamation of character. It's not pretty, but it's hard to blame them. If followed to the letter, and some bishops seem to think that is what is required of them, Dallas makes a shambles of the trust and care that is supposed to prevail between priests and bishops. "I wouldn't think of talking to my bishop without a lawyer present," says a midwestern priest. To which a bishop friend of mine says, "If they've done nothing wrong, they've nothing to fear." That is the familiar claim of police states. Moreover, it is not true.

Dallas explicitly voted against the condition that charges be "credible." Yet bishops are supposed to have a "grace of office" that equips them to make difficult moral and spiritual judgments. Now they trust neither themselves nor the grace bestowed by their ordination. Now they believe they are obliged to traffic in gossip and slander. Or so a literal reading of the Dallas "charter" would suggest. Fortunately, however, while Dallas may propose, realities on the ground frequently dispose. In larger dioceses, so much trash comes in over the transom, much of it incoherent or maliciously fantastical, that bishops cannot avoid making decisions about what is credible, even as they avoid using the word. Policies notwithstanding, common sense persistently intrudes.

Yet, as I write, a priest of my acquaintance awaits word on whether he will be removed from ministry. The bishop received a letter from a party nobody knows who accuses the priest, on the basis of second-hand hearsay, of abusing boys twenty years ago. The priest denies it, the person who the letter writer says told him denies it, no victims or details are given. But, presumably because the writer copied the letter to the D.A.'s office, the bishop says he must act. I know at least three young men who, inspired by the priest's person and ministry, hope to go to seminary. If he is publicly shamed and removed, we will see what happens to their vocations. In similar instances, such charges have been publicized and priests have been removed from ministry until, as it is said, the matter is officially resolved. If it is decided that the charges are without foundation, the Dallas procedures considerately add, everything possible will be done to restore the good name of the priest in question. In most cases, if not all, that will not be possible. Slander and consequent suspicion leave—to use a phrase once applied to the priesthood in a very different sense—an indelible mark.

A bishop for whom I have great respect tells me, "Of course there will be injustices, but that is part of the price we have to pay. What we have learned this year is that, in attitudes and practice, we were negligent and indifferent and permitted terrible things to happen. We have to be punished." There is truth in that. But it is not the bishops who are being punished. The failure to discipline their priests in the past is not remedied by failing to care for their priests now, at least to the extent of trying to secure for them a measure of justice and fair play. Their failure to be the bishops they were called to be in the past is not remedied by their failure to be the bishops they are called to be now. And what about the people in their care? Abdication of responsibility and what is tantamount to complicity in defamation and slander are guaranteed to result in the ever greater—if one may employ what now seems a quaint phrase—"scandalizing of the faithful."

A bishop of a large diocese in the Northeast was pilloried by the media when he said a few months ago, "I am a shepherd, not a cop." It was perhaps an injudicious statement. A good shepherd may sometimes look like a cop when he wards off the wolves and prevents his wicked assistant shepherds from preying on the sheep. But he does those things precisely because he is a good shepherd. The bishop was right. He is a shepherd. When bishops are perceived, or perceive themselves, more as cop than as shepherd, there is insinuated into the life of the Church a corrosive reign of narrow-eyed suspicion that will in the long term do more damage to the faith and to the faithful than all the scandals exposed this past year.

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A Promising Initiative

An official response by Rome to the Dallas actions is expected soon. It is no secret that influential members of the Curia think that the U.S. bishops were panicked into adopting a course that violates both justice and mercy and is, in important respects, incompatible with the Church's doctrine or discipline. There is also very particular concern about the national review board set up by Dallas and headed by Governor Frank Keating of Oklahoma. At stake is the episcopal governance of the Catholic Church in America, and its possible implications for the universal Church. Various lay agitations for "power sharing," such as the organization calling itself Voice of the Faithful, contribute to a circumstance that is aptly described as a concerted and determined effort to change what Catholic tradition has affirmed as Christ's will for the apostolic ordering of Church government. In the American context, this is in some ways a replay of the "lay trusteeship" controversy of the nineteenth century.

It is possible, however, that Rome may hold back on an official response to Dallas until it sees what happens to a "Varium" initiated by eight bishops in this country. Their Varium, or proposal, is for the convening of a plenary council. A council of the Church in America has not been held since the late nineteenth century, although such councils have a venerable place in Catholic history, and, under the leadership of figures such as Charles Borromeo, were crucial to the implementation of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. The hope is that a plenary council here could do the same for the implementation of the Second Vatican Council. The stated purpose of the proposed council is to solemnly receive and act upon the teaching of Vatican II and its subsequent interpretation by the Magisterium, with special reference to bishops, priests, and the universal call to holiness.

More than a hundred bishops have now signed on to the Varium, at least to the extent of asking that it be considered at the next meeting of the bishops conference in November. To the surprise of many, at the September meeting of the administrative committee of the USCCB the Varium itself was rejected, and in its place was established an ad hoc committee that will offer a report on the proposal in November. There will be more on this in the next issue, but I can say now that I am inclined to view the proposal as one of the most promising developments since the scandals broke last January. At the same time, I am impressed by the number of solid bishops who are wary of the proposal. By solid bishops I mean "John Paul II bishops"—men who have a track record of active support for the vibrant orthodoxy of this pontificate. Among their chief concerns is that the announcement of a plenary council will raise expectations among those who have long pressed for radical change in "the spirit of Vatican II"—changes in sharp conflict with the Magisterium's interpretation of the documents of Vatican II.

Canon law specifies that, in addition to bishops, a council must include various clerical and lay participants, and the worry is that this could result in its being hijacked for purposes quite alien to those for which it is convened. These are undoubtedly legitimate concerns, although it seems to me that the authors of the Varium have done a careful job of anticipating what could go wrong—as much as such things can be anticipated—and suggesting ways of keeping the council on track. In any event, the discussion of this proposal is just getting underway, and if—despite the opposition of the USCCB apparat—it is approved, a council would most likely not take place for at least two years. It is a bold, ambitious, and promising proposal that is, I believe, deserving of careful and sympathetic consideration. It holds the hope of restoring confidence in the apostolic integrity of the Church's government.

Rejoicing in Wrong

Since the last installment on the crisis, there has been a great deal of controversy generated by what might be called the "fire-the-bishops" crowd. Intemperate and unseemly assertions have been published by people who should know better to the effect that the whole thing is the fault of John Paul II, and that his person and pontificate are now discredited. People on the left do not like John Paul for many reasons. On the right, there have long been those who have said that he has sorely failed in the government of the Church. The three responsibilities of a bishop are to teach, sanctify, and govern, and among some traditionalists the line is that John Paul gets an A on the first two and an F on the third. Presumably, if he had done his job, he would have gotten rid of all the miscreant and negligent bishops in the U.S.

There are many things wrong with this way of thinking. It reflects a startling ignorance of Catholic ecclesiology, as though the pope is the CEO of Catholicism Inc. rather than what he is: the effective sign of unity among successors to the apostles, each of whom is as much a bishop as he is. It also assumes that there are waiting in the wings men of sterling competence and character ready to take the place of those who are to be "fired." Most depressing, there is a propensity to exaggerate the incidence of malfeasance among the current body of bishops. Let it be said again

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that, despite the panic of Dallas, most of the bishops are trying to be good, holy, and conscientious shepherds. Of course this is a time for careful rethinking about the way in which bishops are selected, and George Weigel's important book, *The Courage to be Catholic*, has useful suggestions in that connection. But in all the understandably doleful reflection upon the present circumstance, especially the failings of bishops, we are to keep in mind the words of St. Paul that love "does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right." Things are bad enough as they are without exaggerating, never mind rejoicing in, all that has gone wrong.

The life of the Church goes on. Talk about the gates of hell not prevailing can be, as is often pointed out, a mark of smug complacency. Trusting the promise of Christ should be a matter of faith-filled confidence that, on the far side of this crisis, there will be a Church purified and revitalized in her pastoral, evangelistic, and culture-transforming mission. We are a long way from the far side of this crisis. Most striking and most hopeful now is how deep and widespread is the awareness that things were allowed to go very wrong for a very long time; that, after this year, there can be no returning to business as usual. I do not want to overstate the change of mood, but it is palpable. Maybe I am too much in conversation with bishops, priests, and lay people who are John Paul II Catholics—Catholics who share his sense of the high adventure of fidelity. But even among those who are not converted to that vision, and we are all on the way to the fullness of conversion, there appears to be a new attentiveness to a better, holier, more challenging, more exciting way of being the Catholic Church in America. Or, at the very least, there is what I mentioned earlier: a deep, even somber, sobriety. It is not unlike a prelude to repentance. After repentance, almost anything can happen.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, federal agencies, the Red Cross, and various charities granted more than $300 million for psychological help to New Yorkers in the form of grief, stress, and trauma therapies. To the amazement of the experts, there were few takers for the proffered help. At mental health clinics, fewer people showed up than at the same time the year before. Sally Satel, a psychiatrist, comments: "The vast majority of people—especially those whose lives are not endangered and who do not suffer profound losses in the wake of catastrophe—get better on their own. The ethos of the mental health profession overstates people's psychological fragility and too readily confuses pathos with pathology. A professor of epidemiology at Columbia University recently pressed for a 'determined effort to help the population withstand such attacks on the psyche.' But such sentiments imply we must rely on professionals to prop up our psyches. They raise doubt when confidence is what we need." Well, they get better not quite on their own, I expect. Families, friends, voluntary associations, and churches do their part. But these agencies of effective support and healing do not get hundred million dollar grants. Of course, another explanation for people not availing themselves of professional help is that New Yorkers are too disoriented to know they're disoriented. Anyway, and to the distress of those selling therapy, they don't want the therapy, even when someone else is paying. A measure of generalized craziness is what makes New York New York. There are no doubt better ways to use that $300 million. Given the track record of government programs and large philanthropies, the best thing might be to return the money to taxpayers and donors. Although I expect a sizable chunk of it has already been spent on an advertising campaign to persuade New Yorkers that they really do need expert help. And another chunk on therapy for the injured self-esteem of therapists.

■ I don't know who wrote it. These things come in over the Internet transom, so to speak. But the following science report may possibly be pertinent to matters governmental, educational, corporate, and even ecclesiastical. "A major research institution has recently announced the discovery of the heaviest element yet known to science, with an atomic mass of 312. This new element has been tentatively named 'Administratium.' Administratium has one neutron, 12 assistant neutrons, 75 deputy neutrons, and 111 assistant deputy neutrons. These particles are held together by a force called morons which is surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since Administratium has no electrons, it is inert. However, it can be detected as it impedes every reaction with which it comes into contact. A minute amount of Administratium causes one reaction to take over four days to complete when it would normally take only a few minutes. Administratium has a normal half-life of three years; it does not decay but instead undergoes a reorganization, in which a portion of the assistant neutrons and deputy neutrons and assistant deputy neutrons exchange places and additional peons are added. In fact, Administratium's mass will

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actually increase over time, since each reorganization causes some morons to become neutrons forming isodopes. This characteristic of moron-promotion leads some scientists to speculate that Administratium is formed whenever morons reach a certain quantity in concentration. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as 'Critical Morass.'"

■ The ELCA Lutheran church council has finally come out with its long awaited statement, *Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation*. At the risk of spoiling the suspense, they're against it. But Richard O. Johnson, associate editor of *Forum Letter* thinks they may be against it for the wrong reasons, or at least not for the most crucially right reasons. He writes: "We're not in favor of lust, either, but its traditional place among the seven deadly sins suggests that in the Christian view, lust is sinful in and of itself, and most of us are guilty. The penitent doesn't generally come to the confessor and say, 'I've sinned by looking at pornography, and thereby I've exploited women and children and magnified social injustice.' No, the penitent has the good sense to know there is sin here, much deeper than exploitation. It is the sin of lust, 'the desire of the flesh.' It stands on its own two feet, thank you, and doesn't really need a train of social and economic consequences to make it evil. Hidden in the middle of the message is a statement that we at the ELCA 'teach the difference between loving sexuality and sexual violence and exploitation.' One would hope we do. But if that is all there is at the heart of this church's teaching on human sexuality, we have missed the boat entirely. What if the church council's message had been something like this: 'We are to fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other' (*Small Catechism*). It would have left out a lot of psycho-social rhetoric, to be sure, and perhaps it would be too simple in a complex world. But it would have saved a lot of paper, it would have been read by a lot more people, and it would have had, one thinks, a lot more staying power."

■ "Cutting Icons Down to Clay Feet." The heading of the review signals that Ben Brantley, theater critic of the *New York Times*, has found another "transgressive" work to celebrate. This one is by Jean Genet, the French writer, pedophile, sadomasochist, and homosexual prostitute who was jailed not for buggery but for burglary. Lionized bad boy of the literary elite, Genet had a long list of degradations to his credit, including having sex with the Stalinist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. The play, written in the 1950s, was titled *Saintette*, which Alan Cumming—on whom Brantley also did a fawning profile—adapted as *Elle*. It is about a pope (not this one, Brantley assures us) who knows that "she" is faking it but feels compelled to go through the motions of the Catholic thing. Daring, *non*? The message is simple-minded and repetitive, Brantley admits, but the presentation is "richly theatrical entertainment" and goes beyond "homosexual campiness" to reach new heights of "the impeccably vulgar." While Mr. Brantley finds decadence and blasphemy entertaining, when well done, he is by no means indifferent to the question of "redeeming social merit," to use the legal phrase for tolerable obscenity. "What *Elle* makes of the themes of sacrificial celebrity and the world's hunger for human gods," he writes, "seems painfully pertinent just now." That is undoubtedly meant to mean something. Perhaps that Jean Genet's and his pleasure in mocking the pope is not unmixed with pain. It is a sad duty, but somebody has to do it. Giggle, giggle.

■ John Gross is an eminent man of letters and author of *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. He was also for four years editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*. He has now written a winsome memoir about growing up in wartime London, *A Double Thread* (Ivan R. Dee). He writes that "for many Jews, whatever the larger historical balance sheet, anti-Semitism is the heart of the matter, the only significant reason why they still feel Jewish." That is not the case with John Gross. "To have had a religious upbringing at least assures that in your own mind you are a Jew first, and the object of other people's dislike second."

■ John Cornwell, author of the discredited and defamatory book on Pius XII, *Hitler's Pope*, subsequently published *Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People, and the Future of Catholicism*. The gist of the argument is that, unless the Church revolutionizes itself along the lines prescribed by John Cornwell, it will not likely last out the century. This essentially silly exercise in megalomania has been almost universally ignored, but here it appears as the long lead review in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The review by Rupert Shortt bears the heading, "The Papacy of John Paul II: A Case for the Prosecution," and Mr. Shortt pretty much agrees with Cornwell the prosecutor, except for suggesting that the Church is adept enough to accept the prescribed changes and therefore may last a while longer. The review is almost as biased and ignorant as Cornwell's book, which is somewhat disconcerting since Mr. Shortt is now the religion editor of the *TLS*. Consider but a couple of dozens of examples that might be cited. "The Vatican was defending slavery as recently as the 1860s, and did not acknowledge the principle of the freedom of conscience for a further century after that." Come again? The Christian

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challenge to slavery goes back to St. Paul's letter to Philemon, and is underscored in New Testament passages such as Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Colossians 3:11. With Constantine, the institution of slavery, everywhere practiced until then, was sharply mitigated under the Church's influence. When European conquerors introduced slavery in the New World, the institution was explicitly condemned by Paul III in 1537, by Pius V in 1567, and by Urban VIII in 1639. And, of course, slavery was made illegal in Britain in 1808 and the slave trade abolished in 1833 as a result of the very explicitly Christian campaign of Wilberforce and others. As Thomas Sowell and other scholars have definitively demonstrated, slavery was an almost universal institution until Christianity, and continues in parts of the world today, notably under Muslim auspices. Does Mr. Shortt not know this elementary history and, if not, why? As for the freedom, rights, and obligations of conscience, Philosophy 101 might have introduced him to the Greek notion of *syneidesis*, a quiet conscience, which, under Christian influence, was transformed into the right and obligation to obey the truth, even against all earthly authorities. The reviewer might at least have a vague remembrance of having heard "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Luke 20) or St. Peter's answer to the authorities, "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5). Where does Mr. Shortt think the idea of the freedom and obligations of conscience comes from? There is no denying that advances in understanding are often painfully slow, marked by fits and starts, and frequent regressions. One can find innumerable dumb things said and done by Christians in the name of Christianity, both in the past and at present—perhaps especially at present. The propensity to say and do dumb things, and even wicked things, is simply part of human nature. One can blame the Church or Christianity for such things only on the thoroughly unwarranted assumption that Christianity claims to have abolished human nature. The truth is that Christianity, and the Catholic Church in particular, is the mother of Western civilization, with all it strengths and weaknesses, including its frequently exaggerated penchant for self-criticism. Like others who know what it is to be a mother, she is not surprised, although sometimes disappointed, when she is blamed for everything and thanked for nothing. One is not surprised by the ignorance and spite of thankless children such as John Cornwell. But from the *TLS* one has come to expect better, much better.

■ With every day's mail, e-mail, and faxes there arrive dozens of statements issued by sundry groups. Most of them don't get read; those that do usually have a short shelf life. "Reflections on Covenant and Mission" certainly got read, and as a consequence had a very short shelf life. It was issued by the Catholic bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, along with four of the largest rabbinical organizations in the country. Criticizing efforts to convert Jews to Christianity, it declared that "campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church." One can quibble over what is meant by "target," but evangelical Protestants and Catholics who protested the statement thought it was saying that Christians should no longer share their faith with Jews or pray for their conversion. The statement was issued on August 12 and hastily withdrawn on August 20. Speaking for the bishops' committee, William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore said the statement does not represent the position of the U.S. bishops conference and that, while respecting the lasting covenant that God has made with the Jewish people, "the faithful should be open to the action of God's grace to bring people to accept the fullness of the means of salvation which are found in the Church." So it is again the official position that interreligious dialogue and its attendant etiquette are not incompatible with the freedom and responsibility to bear witness to the truth as one has been given to know the truth. It is not clear how the foul-up happened, but it is gratifying that it was so promptly remedied. Except, of course, for all those people who read the press reports that the Catholic Church teaches that Christians should no longer share their faith with everyone. Most of them will not likely hear about Cardinal Keeler's retraction.

■ You know the old—very old—one about the fellow taking the Rorschach test who is told by the psychiatrist that he has a dirty mind, and he responds, "You're the one showing the dirty pictures." Well, it seems the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was sponsoring a workshop on "Great Sex" as part of a Stop AIDS Project. CDC promised the event would provide "some fun interactive intimacy games to help you keep sex safe and hot!" People sending e-mails to protest the program discovered that their messages were never received. CDC computers were blocking the messages because they contained "obscene" materials that violated government decency standards. The obscene materials in question were the materials used by CDC to publicize the workshop. Your government at work. Against itself.

■ I wouldn't go so far as to say that James Skillen is a Calvinist of the strict observance, but he is a Calvinist in the Abraham Kuyper tradition, and his Washington-based Center for Public Justice is usually a font of Christianly informed wisdom about the right ordering

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of our life together. But he has taken a wrong turn, I think, in urging that the U.S. should endorse the International Criminal Court. By rejecting the ICC, he says, "the U.S. has all but thumbed its nose at those nations, including all of its European allies, who want to strengthen the international rule of law." I don't know anybody who does not favor the international rule of law. The rule of international law is a different matter. International law, apart from certain cooperative agreements deemed to be in the interest of all participating nation states, has a very dubious standing in both theory and practice. There is, for instance, the very big problem that the U.S., as the world's only effective peacekeeper at present and for the foreseeable future, may be cited for crimes against humanity by the ICC simply because judges and administrators, who are accountable to no one but themselves, may politically disagree with a particular policy. Hundreds of civilians, to take but one example, were inadvertently killed in the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. It is no secret that some in the "international community" think that the U.S. action there was a crime against humanity. That complaint will undoubtedly be heard more loudly if and when the U.S. takes action to replace Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Skillen offers the reassurance that "the ICC will have no authority to take on cases handled by national courts, nor may it begin a trial before a pretrial chamber has shown that there is a reasonable basis for action." That reassurance is not very reassuring. The U.S. is not likely to take itself to U.S. courts, charging that the U.S. is guilty of a crime against humanity in Iraq. As for the "pretrial chamber," it is part and parcel of the ICC itself. Skillen writes that the U.S. rejection of the ICC "contradicts the very principles that Americans say they stand for. If the rule of law and equal treatment under the law should be universal, then the U.S. cannot ask others to do what it will not do." Just a minute now. When Americans speak of their universal hope for freedom, democracy, equality, and related good things, another key principle comes into play. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, just government is derived from the consent of the governed. The very legitimacy of the ICC, and of much that passes as international law, is thrown into question by the fact that it is not accountable to the governed—either through direct relationship to any representative democratic process or to the nation-states that govern by consent. On the other hand, the regimes that do not govern by consent—a majority of states in the world—have a big say in the ICC and similar institutions of international "law." "The second big mistake" in the U.S. rejection of the ICC, writes Skillen, "is its lack of realism about balance-of-power politics." He notes that the U.S. will not always be in the driver's seat of world affairs, and that its present supremacy invites envious challenges from other powers. That empires rise and fall is a truism. That the ICC and other challengers such as the European Union are themselves largely driven by the desire to counter the supremacy of the U.S. should be obvious to all. The argument that it is prudent, never mind morally imperative, for the U.S. to join in supporting movements and institutions aimed at countering and undermining its own understanding of its responsibilities in the world is less than persuasive. Since Kuyper died in 1920, I can't claim to know what he would think, but I very much doubt that Jim Skillen would have him on his side on this one.

■ Sarah Lyall reports in the *New York Times* on a Turkish immigrant in Sweden who killed his twenty-six-year-old daughter because she "dishonored" the family by adapting to Swedish mores. Ms. Lyall observes that this is a "tragic emblem of a European society's failure to bridge the gap in attitudes between its own culture and those of its newer arrivals." Laws against murder are *so* ethnocentric.

■ Articles and books beginning with a reference to September 11 must now number in the tens of thousands. The historian George McKenna, a frequent contributor to these pages, begins his article on "the Puritan origins of American patriotism" in the current *Yale Review* with the inquisition of Mistress Anne Hutchinson in Puritan New England, and goes on through world wars, the Great Depression, and Vietnam, ending with September 11. Note that, about some things, even the great Tocqueville didn't get it quite right. McKenna writes, "Then, literally out of the blue, came the events of 11 September. The shock not only jolted the two major parties into a consensus on foreign policy; it seemed to close the book on the 'American issue.' Not just liberal politicians but liberal writers and artists rushed to declare their support for the Bush Administration's 'war on terrorism.' Sometimes they sounded more patriotic than the conservatives, or at least more puritanical. They chided Bush for not demanding more sacrifices from Americans: less spending on consumer baubles, driving less, getting rid of their SUVs. (Recalling John Winthrop: 'Wee must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities.') They even signaled their obeisance to religion, the inextricable part of American patriotism. God knows how many unbelievers stood with heads bowed during all the prayerful assemblies that followed the disaster. The gesture had to be made. Everyone was in a foxhole now, so nobody was an atheist, at least not publicly. . . . So the Puritan legacy, the myth of America as a people sent to do justice and assured of some kind of collective salvation by their

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fidelity, was still intact after all. How long would this revival last? It was hard to say. The flags were still waving defiantly as the new year began, signaling Americans' determination to stay the course, yet there were also indications that Americans wanted their President to talk less about the war and more about curing the ailing economy. But that is more or less beside the point. The point is this: when the chips are down, when the stakes are high, Americans go back to their imagined community of 'visible saints.' They start talking about grace and consecration and sanctification, language found nowhere in the Constitution or even in the Declaration of Independence. It is biblical, prophetic language, the language of sermons and jeremiads. It reappears each time the nation needs to gird its loins, concentrate its mind, and throw itself against whatever threatens its life: a foreign foe, a domestic rebellion, a Great Depression, a conspiracy of terror. After the crisis has passed, 'normalcy' eventually returns, and a new generation may even wonder what the fuss was all about. More than half a century after the American Revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville worried about the tendency of modern democracy toward a kind of collective amnesia. In the modern age, he wrote, 'the prestige of memories has passed' and people 'find their country nowhere.' Tocqueville died in 1859. Had he lived a few years longer, he would have seen the revival of old memories and new homage paid to the imagined community where American patriotism was born."

■ I'm not sure he got it entirely right, but it bears more than a moment's thought. The philosopher Roger Scruton is writing about Great Britain, but his point likely has wider application: "Traditional societies divide into upper, middle, and working class. In modern societies that division is overlaid by another, which also contains three classes. The new classes are, in ascending order, the morons, the yuppies, and the stars. The first watch TV, the second make programs, and the third appear on them. And because those who appear on the screen cultivate the manners of the people who are watching them, implying that they are only there by accident, and that tomorrow it may very well be the viewer's turn, all possibility of resentment is avoided. At the same time, the emotional and intellectual torpor induced by TV neutralizes the social mobility that would otherwise enable the morons to change their lot. So obvious is this that it is dangerous to say it. Class distinctions have not disappeared from modern life; they have merely become unmentionable."

■ Taking a "character education" course is not necessarily the same thing as having character. Philip Rieff, author of the 1965 classic, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, wrote: "Character was once understood as graven, deeply etched, changeable rarely and least of all in extreme situations, when the resistances against quick change were mobilized most compellingly." Sociologist Alan Woolfolk cites that in his discussion of James Davison Hunter's *The Death of Character: Moral Education Without Good or Evil*, an excerpt from which appeared in these pages ("Leading Children Beyond Good and Evil," May 2000). Hunter contends that even conservative Christian proponents of moral education succumb to the therapeutic in the long run. Writing in *Society*, Woolfolk says: "In the case of moral education, this lack of resistance is stunning, given the lack of evidence supporting the basic premise of this regime that personal psychological well-being is the foundation of moral conduct, and given the ineffectiveness of specific programs in drug and sex education. 'There is little or no association, causal or otherwise,' Hunter summarizes, 'between psychological well-being and moral conduct, and psychologically oriented moral education programs have little or no positive effect upon moral behavior, achievement, or anything else.' Evangelical Protestants are singled out in particular because of their failed attempts to co-opt secular psychology for religious purposes. After reviewing prominent works of evangelical guidance by James Dobson, Kenneth Erickson, Charles Gerber, and Neil Mohney, Hunter concludes that it is popular psychology that frames the discussion of biblical morality, not the other way around, despite the harsh criticism of secular public education and defense of character education by conservative Protestants. Likewise, neoclassical and communitarian defenses of moral education, exemplified respectively in the efforts of William Bennett and Amitai Etzioni, have inspired programs of character education that have not so much challenged the dominant psychological approach as repackaged the language of self-esteem and personal well-being into a more traditional format. After reviewing studies of such programs, Hunter concludes that 'the newly revived character education programs favored by neoclassical and communitarian educators appear no more likely to have an enduring effect on children than those in the psychological strategy.' Hunter does find an exception to this pattern of accommodation among children raised within the 'theistic' and 'conventionalist' moral cultures: they are more likely to show altruism and self-restraint against temptation. But as they grow older they 'let go' of their moral cultures, becoming 'less altruistic in their disposition toward those in need and more willing to fudge the boundaries of moral propriety,' succumbing to the therapeutic ethos." The god of a therapeutically defined sense of well-being can be effectively

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countered, it appears, only by those who have the nerve to contend for truth, as in "the way, the truth, and the life."

■ Here comes everybody (as James Joyce, it seems, did not describe the Catholic Church), and Pius X Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, does mean everybody. I snitch from Martin Marty's *Context* the ad that Pius X ran, urging people to "come home" to the Church. The ad includes a special welcome to "single, twice-divorced, under thirty, gay, filthy rich, black and proud, poor as dirt, can't sing, *no habla Ingles*, married with pets, older than God, more Catholic than the pope, workaholic, bad speller, screaming babies, three-times divorced, passive-aggressive, obsessive-compulsive, tourists, seekers, doubters, bleeding hearts . . . oh, and you." The call to holiness, said Vatican Council II, is universal, and everybody has to begin somewhere.

■ In the absence of an argument, change the subject. Peter Singer of Princeton, writing in *Free Inquiry*, the secular humanist publication, responds to my commentary on our debate at Colgate University ("A Curious Encounter with a Philosopher from Nowhere," FT, Public Square, February 2002). After offering his idiosyncratic—and, if I may say so, lamentably ill-informed and literalistic—view that the Scriptures have nothing to say about abortion or the creating and destroying of embryos for research purposes, and may, in fact, approve of suicide, he changes the subject to Matthew 19 and Jesus' counsel to the rich young man to sell all he has and give the money to the poor. Professor Singer exults, Gotcha! It has come to his attention that most Christians do not sell all they have and give the proceeds to the poor! He also notes that FT carries an advertisement for a Catholic investing service, in clear violation of the words of Jesus to "take no thought for the morrow." Gotcha again! Prof. Singer writes, "Father Neuhaus denies that the Christian ethic tells us to share extensively with the poor." That, of course, is nonsense. Singer writes, "I have advocated, without any appeal to religion, that those of us who are sufficiently comfortably off to be able to spend much of our income on frivolities like restaurants, the theater, fashionable clothes, and vacations abroad should give a substantial proportion of our income to organizations working to assist the world's poorest people." On that we are in complete agreement, and I am glad to be assured that Prof. Singer, who is very comfortably off indeed, does that. I also agree that such generosity need not be religiously motivated but can be in response to a sense of natural justice. What I do deny is that Prof. Singer's laudable concern for world hunger is relevant to his support for creating and destroying human life in the laboratory, for the unlimited abortion license, and for a policy permitting the killing of children who are already born but, because of some defect, are no longer wanted. The debate is not about whether Peter Singer is in some respects a nice person, nor is it about whether all Christians live in a manner consistent with the Christian ethic (however he misconstrues that ethic). He is and they don't. The debate is about this "philosopher from nowhere" and his advocacy of the morally monstrous. Were I in Prof. Singer's position, I, too, might want to change the subject. Much to be preferred, of course, is that he would change his mind.

■ It is the exaggeration that offends, and the self-pity that galls. Rod Dreher of *National Review* has played a prominent role in publicizing Catholic scandals, and has made valuable contributions along the way. He writes about the difficulty in getting his family "through the present storm with its faith in Catholicism intact." For instance: "You try—humiliatingly—to figure out how to tell your little boy that it can be dangerous to his body and soul to trust priests, the foremost icons of Christ in the daily lives of Catholics." He should stop figuring. He should not tell that to his little boy. Sexual abuse, in the vast majority of cases, is perpetrated by relatives and by friends and members of the immediate family. Should a father tell his little boy not to trust his uncles or, for that matter, his teachers? A sensible parent who has any reason to believe that his child may be endangered by a particular adult has ways to make sure that the child is never alone with that adult. It is a cruel thing needlessly to instill in a child distrust toward those whom they admire. It is a scurrilous thing to suggest, as Mr. Dreher does, that priests in general, as distinct from the one or two percent who stand convicted or in any way accused, are to be suspected of abusing children. In the same article, Dreher blames John Paul II, who "retains in office a host of American bishops defiled by their indifference to the victims of depraved priests under their authority." He is wrong again. Many bishops did not do all they should have done or did what was then, but is not now, thought to be the right thing to do. But "a host" of bishops "indifferent" to the sexual abuse of children? That is not true. The Pope could, says Dreher, remove such bishops "with a stroke of his pen." That, too, is not true. Then the "host" of wicked bishops becomes a "legion." The scandals, we are given to understand, have been very difficult for Rod Dreher. "Unless [the Pope] takes dramatic action to restore the Church to holiness—starting with deposing this legion of bad bishops—his criticism of modern society will ring hollow in the heart of this faithful American Catholic. And that is painful beyond words to say." Does Mr. Dreher really mean to

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say that the heroic life and witness of John Paul has been for naught? What the Pope says, for instance, about the culture of life vs. the culture of death rings hollow to Rod Dreher, faithful Catholic. Or, as he puts it, faithful American Catholic. So very American. Of John Paul he writes, "I find it impossible any longer to give him the benefit of every doubt, as is the custom of many papal loyalists." If there really is doubt, one might think that faithful Catholics would give the Pope the benefit of it. Dreher, on the other hand, appears to have no doubt about the charges he levels against the Pope and a host of bishops, nor about the distrust deserved by priests in general. We know that Mr. Dreher has had a difficult year. A lot of people are hurting, some even more than Mr. Dreher. It should not be denied that Rod Dreher is on many matters a talented and very professional journalist. Loyal friends—Dreher loyalists, so to speak—should give him the benefit of the hope that he will in the future write more honestly, informedly, and responsibly about the Church that he undoubtedly loves.

■ Professor David J. O'Brien of Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, is not at all sure that groups such as Voice of the Faithful are really serious about, as they put it, "taking back our church." Writing in the *Boston Globe*, he asks, "Will they come up with the funds, $1 million to begin with, needed to turn a protest movement into an organization that can give the laity a genuine voice in the decisions that will shape the future of American Catholicism?" "Many Catholics," he writes, "are too poor, too busy, or too beset by life's trials to join a group. Those who have resources of time, money, and education have to act. . . . The future is, as it should be, in the hands of ordinary Catholics." The good news is that ordinary Catholics are not poor, busy, or beset by life's trials.

■ "I think atheists tend to be pretty individualistic people and when people tell them what to do they might go the other way," says Dave Anderson, director of the Washington State branch of American Atheists. That fierce individualism may keep down the numbers showing up for the "Godless Americans March on Washington," scheduled for November 2. The communitarian spirit seems to be storming a final redoubt. "We're here, and we want to share the country with everybody else," says Mr. Anderson. "There's a need for fellowship amongst atheists. God might not be part of it, but I think it's important to meet people who have similar beliefs." Even atheism is going wimpy.

■ It was our great good fortune to have Midge Decter on staff here for a number of years, and I've already written about her latest book, *An Old Wife's Tale* (While We're At It, August/September 2001). I should have included this piece of Midgean wisdom noted by Andrew Ferguson in the *Weekly Standard*. Discussing her trepidation as her teenage daughters faced the sexual regression of the sixties, Midge wrote: "Lust as an independent value divorces itself from institutions, personal relations, and travels with utter unconcern from creature contact to creature contact. This is, as a matter of fact, exactly how the Puritans understood the matter, and they were right. We understand it, too, in the pits of our stomachs if not in our minds, and we scurry about to improvise our excuses." The scurrying goes on.

■ "I spent twenty years looking for a government to overthrow without being thrown in jail," says Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice. "I finally found one in the Catholic Church." Of course everyone knows, or should know by now, that CFC is a completely fraudulent organization, run by an anti-Catholic and funded by those who see the Catholic Church as the chief obstacle to their ambitions to redesign the world in their image. According to a recent report, that funding includes $375,000 from billionaire Warren Buffett, $600,000 from the Hewlett Foundation, $1.6 million from the MacArthur Foundation, $3.8 million from the Packard Foundation, $4.4 million from the Ford Foundation, plus generous support from Ted Turner, the Playboy Foundation, and the Sunnen Foundation, the last being a manufacturer of contraceptive foam. CFC joins with Catholic organizations demanding an expansion of the "voice of the laity" and calling for an "open church." Fox News says Ms. Kissling would only agree to be interviewed if CFC was portrayed in a "positive" light. "The demand was rejected," Fox reports. Now I've mentioned it again, and will likely get the usual messages saying we should not waste ink on such obvious phoniness as Kissling and CFC. Along with other messages from those who say we should not neglect the obvious.

■ It has outraged those who think Christian teaching should be changed, but few dispute the scholarship and conclusions of Robert A. J. Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon). Gabriel Fackre of Andover Newton Theological School takes a somewhat different tack, reviewing the book in *Pro Ecclesia*. "It should be an indispensable resource for dialogue and decisions," he writes. "Especially so because it casts the issue in theological terms rather than in culture-war categories. A caveat, however, is in order. The case Gagnon has made for the normativity of male-female conjugal union can be affirmed (as this reviewer does) while recognizing a place for pastoral as well as legal

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judgment, and the treatment of aspects of this issue as a 'disputed question' rather than as a church-dividing issue. . . . The Church has a history of wrestling with controverted questions, and as a company of forgiven sinners knows of a divine grace that may translate into an exception to a rule as well as to its upholding." One may sympathize with Professor Fackre's pastoral sensitivity while respectfully disagreeing. It is precisely as a company of forgiven sinners that the Church is not permitted to teach that sin is not sin.

■ For the record: the editor of *Books & Culture* and the editor of *Crisis* say the subscription figures I gave recently are somewhat on the low side. *Books & Culture* reports eleven to thirteen thousand subscribers and *Crisis* a little over twenty thousand. I am pleased to stand corrected.

■ The handful of cells, certain advocates of cloning like to say, is no larger than the period at the end of this sentence. So also says Cass R. Sunstein in his review of Francis Fukuyama's worrying new book, *Our Posthuman Future*. "If scientists will be using and cloning embryos only at a very early stage when they are just a handful of cells (say, before they are four days old), there is no good reason for a ban," writes Sunstein. "It is silly to think that 'potential' is enough for moral concern. Sperm cells have 'potential' and (not to put too fine a point on it) most people are not especially solicitous about them." Heh, heh. That Sunstein is one smart law professor. Well, not really. Sperm cells, even under optimal conditions, will never, never ever, become a human being. But that earliest embryo will, barring natural disaster or lethal human intervention, become what everybody recognizes as a human baby on its further way to becoming a fully developed human being. Contra Sunstein, potential is enough. The truth is so blindingly obvious that many are blind to it: nothing that is not a human being has the potential of becoming a human being, and nothing that has the potential of becoming a human being is not a human being. Or, to revert to the favored image of the cloners and eugenicists, all of them, including Cass Sunstein, were once no larger than the period at the end of this sentence. Many years ago, a person looking at such a tiny dot through a microscope might have said, "That is going to be, and therefore that is, Cass Sunstein." One wonders if Mr. Sunstein really believes that that observation would have been "silly." Such an observation would have required supra-human prescience, to be sure, but can it be silly if, in indisputable fact, it is true?

■ Patrick Walsh of Quincy, Massachusetts, sends along some letters he wrote the *Boston Globe* which, unsurprisingly, were not published. In one he is responding to a column by James Carroll (he who committed *Constantine's Sword*) complaining about the Pope's supposed promotion of "creeping infallibility." Mr. Walsh includes the sage observation by George Bernard Shaw that I had read many years ago but had quite forgotten: "George Bernard Shaw had a better understanding of the subject—'I had better inform my readers that the famous dogma of papal infallibility is by far the most modest profession of its kind in existence. Compared to our infallible democracies, our infallible medical councils, our infallible astronomers, our infallible parliaments, the Pope is on his knees in the dust confessing his ignorance before God.'"

■ Two years ago I opined in this space that there was in sight a corner of cultural turning, and last December I wrote that we were almost there. Sure enough, this summer the *New York Times* announced that its wedding announcements will from now on include same-sex relationships. The section is now called "Weddings/Celebrations." I expect there was a good deal of editorial discussion about just what term to use. "Celebrations" might include birthdays, anniversaries, and births, but that's what the editors settled on, although it's not the term used by people availing themselves of the new policy to date. I hope you will not think less of me if I say that I do not usually read wedding announcements, but I did notice the section in the paper of Sunday, September 8. I see that Sara Falkenberry and Eric Ridder III got married, as did Rachel Zimmerman and Seth Teller, Anne Carey and Michael Kelly, George du Pont (yes, of those du Ponts) and Julie Bauman, along with a dozen or so others. Smack in the middle of the page is a picture of two guys with this information: "Thomas William Leonard and Ralph Christopher Lione will declare their commitment today in a ceremony aboard the Yankee Ferry, a floating museum, docked at Pier 25 in Lower Manhattan. A group of six friends, led by Cherrene Horazuk, executive director of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, or CISPES, will present a series of readings and personal observations about the couple. Mr. Leonard (above right) is the fundraising director for CISPES," etc. With the other pictures accompanying announcements, there is of course no "above left" or "above right" to specify who is who. Explication is made necessary by the denial of the obvious. We are told they "will declare their commitment," which, in addition to their commitment to the leftist rebels in El Salvador, presumably means their desire to be known not just as a couple of guys but as guys who are a couple. The other announcements are about two people entering

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the institution of marriage defined by centuries of public custom and law entailing promises, obligations, property rights, and, at least implicitly, the next generation of families—including, in this instance, at least two dynasties. Mr. Leonard and Mr. Lione, on the other hand, "declare their commitment." Presumably they are friends who really love one another, are homosexual, are living together, and want everybody to know about it. Well, good for them. No, I don't mean good as in good. I mean that, since I don't know them and have no direct responsibility for their spiritual welfare, I don't think their feelings or living arrangements or sexual practices are any of my business. Not very long ago, such publicity would have been condemned as an invasion of privacy. People who publicize the private details of their lives used to be called exhibitionists. Mr. Leonard and Mr. Lione, along with the editors of the *Times*, seem to think that an item about two gay guys living together, when it appears in a section that used to be called "Weddings," is about something other than two gay guys living together. It is very poignant.

■ The inimitable Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete puts the sex abuse scandals very nicely into perspective: "If, in addition to all the terrible things we have learned, it was revealed tomorrow that the Pope had a harem, that all the cardinals had made money on Enron stock and were involved in Internet porn, then the situation of the Church today would be similar to the situation of the Church in the late twelfth century when Francis of Assisi first kissed a leper." In short, the Church will only be renewed by saints, meaning sinners—bishops, priests, and all the faithful—responding to the universal call to holiness.

■ This morning, at the corner of Fourteenth Street and First Avenue, I turned around to look again at where the towers were. It was exactly a year ago, on a Tuesday morning of such beauty as inspires songs about autumn in New York, that on the way to say the nine o'clock Mass we saw the first plane strike, and then the billowing clouds of desolation appealing to the skies. A small crowd had gathered at the corner, looking up in the curiosity that preceded shock. "There must be thousands of people in there," I said. "Pray for them." Then I went in to the altar of God to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of the cross that anticipated, caught up, and mysteriously redeemed all the desolations of time. After Mass, when we learned the full horror of what had happened, I went to the hospitals in this part of the city to do what a priest does. The emergency rooms were empty. After a while, we knew that the few who were found were being sent not to the hospitals but to the morgue. There are usually about a hundred people at the nine o'clock; this morning there were several times that. The first lesson was St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7: "For the form of this world is passing away." The gospel reading was the beatitudes from Luke. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh." There was in the congregation a palpable hunger, and there was weeping, and there was faith, in the painful awareness of a form of the world that had passed away. The papers contained little else this morning. At a loss for what to do on momentous occasions, the *Times*, as is its custom, published a thick special supplement with second-rate writers repeating third-rate thoughts about "what has changed," the usual babble by which we ward off silence. At Ground Zero this morning they are reading the Gettysburg Address—a spiritually, ritually, and rhetorically deprived society reaches back to a time when we knew how to speak in public about dedication, sacrifice, judgment, and the purposes of God. Not everything was so embarrassingly inadequate. On *Frontline* the other night, PBS showed the two-hour documentary produced by Helen Whitney, "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero." Get a tape of it if you can. It has been many years since I have seen anything on television that caught the significance of a solemn moment so exactly right. The pollsters debate whether there has been a "spiritual renewal" since September 11. How little of the truth is accessible to their methodologies. You should listen to those with whom Helen Whitney spoke. You should have been at Immaculate Conception—or, I expect, at thousands of other parishes across the country—this morning. I thought it jarring at first when an elderly priest said afterwards, "They chose exactly the wrong time to try to take out the Church." He was referring to this year's media storm over priestly scandals, believing, as he does, that it was mainly a scheme to destroy the Catholic Church, or at least to eliminate its public influence. I think he is wrong. The crisis was not and is not mainly about that. But he is right about the indomitable strength of the community gathered by the only hope that endures. "For the form of this world is passing away." "Blessed are you who weep. . . ." Such were my thoughts this morning as I turned back at Fourteenth and First to look once again at the bright sky where the towers used to be.

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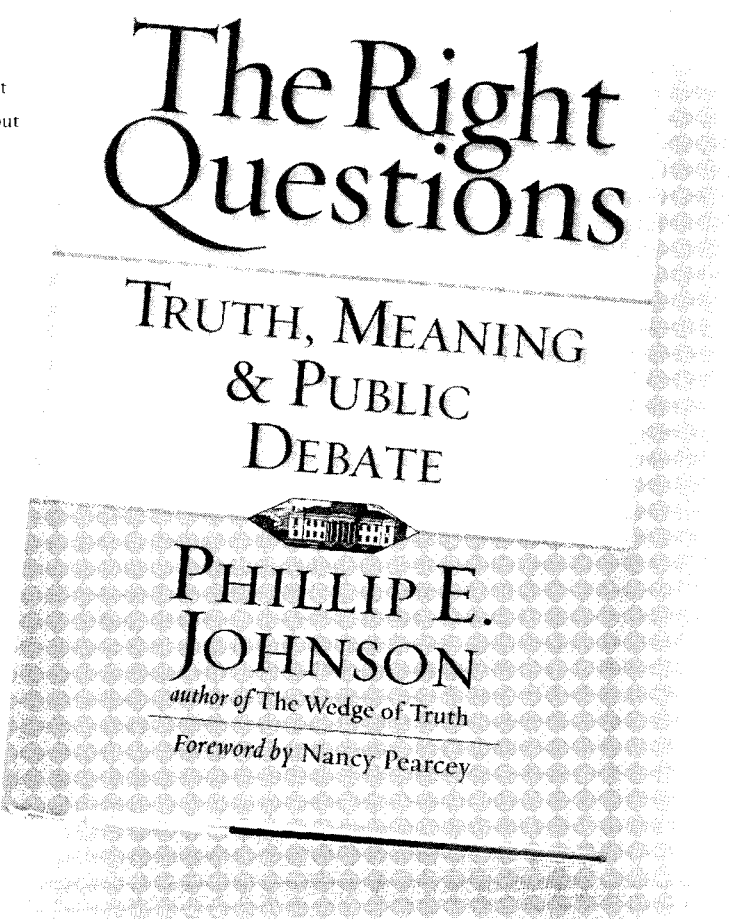
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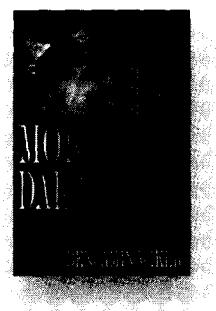

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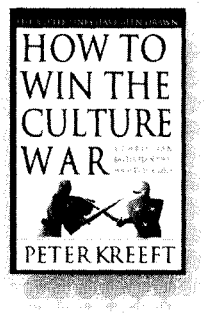

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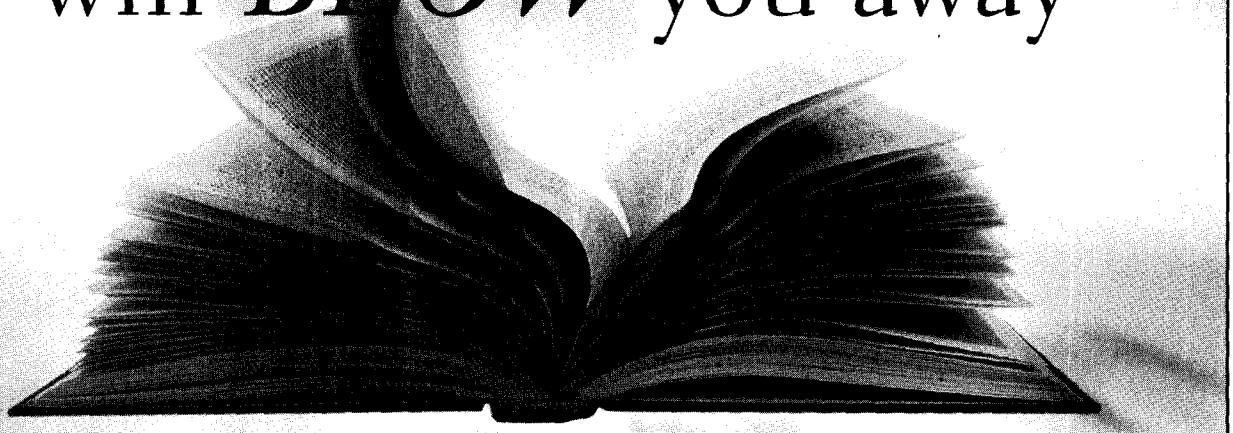

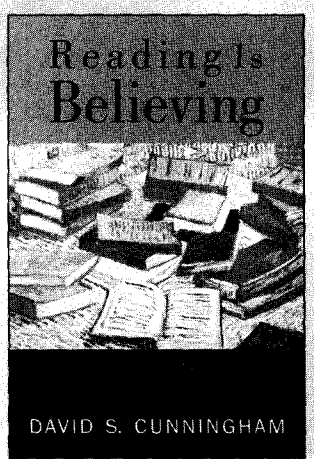

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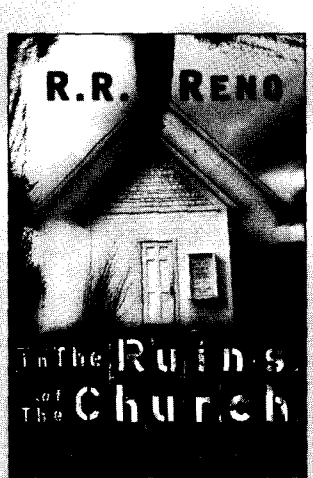

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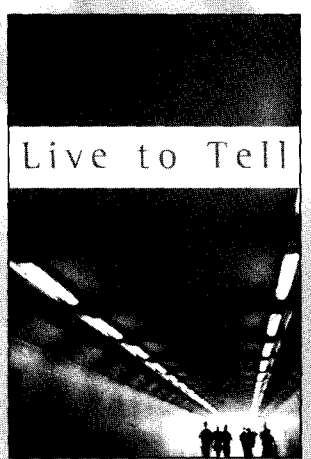

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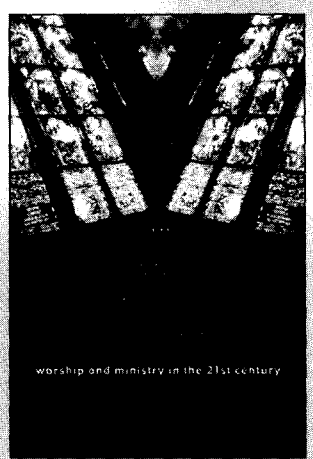

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